NATION

NIA to probe sabotage of railway tracks: Vaishnaw

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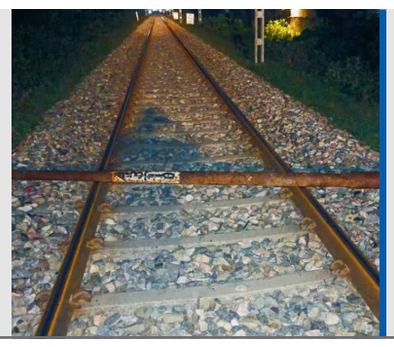

BUSINESS

Delaware SC ruling affirms BYJU's default on $1.2B loan

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SPORTS

Gukesh, Pragg, Vaishali accorded grand welcome

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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MUDA mess: HC upholds Guv nod to prosecute; CM cries foul

HC says Guv has 'applied his mind' & has right to take independent decisions

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

In a setback to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Karnataka High Court on Tuesday dismissed his petition challenging Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's approval for a probe against him in the MUDA land allotment case. The court said the gubernatorial order nowhere "suffers from want of application of mind".

He had challenged the legality of Gehlot's sanction for the investigation against him in the alleged irregularities in the allotment of 14 sites to his wife by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) in a prime locality.

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Students walk past barricades as security is beefed up near Siddaramaiah's home in Bengaluru on Tuesday

Vendetta politics, says CM

Immediately after the verdict, BJP demanded Siddaramaiah's resignation, to which the he hit back and accused the Narendra Modi-led NDA government of indulging in "vendetta" politics against Opposition-ruled state governments, including Karnataka. He also rejected the Opposition's demand for his resignation.

"Why should I resign? Has (HD) Kumaraswamy (Union Minister) resigned? He is on bail," Siddaramaiah said at a press conference here.

Accusing BJP and JD(S) of "conspiracy, misuse of Raj Bhavan", Siddaramaiah said he would not be afraid of them as the people are with him and he and his party have their blessings.

"All Ministers including Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar , MLAs, party leaders, workers and high command are with me. High Command will cooperate with me in continuing the legal fight," he said. He also said that he would decide on his next course of action and legal fight after consulting legal experts and party leaders. "I still say I have done no wrong," he asserted. The single judge bench of Justice M Nagaprasanna said in normal circumstances, a governor has to act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, "but (the Governor) can take independent decisions in exceptional circumstances " and dismissed Siddaramaiah's petition. "No fault can be found with the Governor exercising the independent discretion to pass the impugned order," he added.

> **I will not hesitate from facing investigation. I will consult experts whether such a probe is allowed under law or not**
>
> -Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

What did the court say?

Justice Nagaprasanna completed the hearings on the chief minister's petition in six sittings from 19 August, and on 12 September reserved its verdict.

The MUDA case over which Gehlot accorded sanction for investigation against Siddaramaiah has its origins more than three decades ago. Gehlot on 16 August accorded sanction under Section 17A of Prevention of Corruption Act. In the petition, the Chief Minister submitted that the sanction order was issued without due "application of mind, in violation of statutory mandates, and contrary to Constitutional principles, including the advice of the Council of Ministers, which is binding under Article 163 of the Constitution of India". Siddaramaiah sought quashing of the Governor's order contending that his decision was legally "unsustainable, procedurally flawed, and motivated by extraneous considerations". Justice Nagaprasanna said, the complainants were justified in registering the complaint or seeking approval at the hands of the Governor. "The facts narrated in the petition would undoubtedly require investigation, in the teeth of the fact that the beneficiary of all these acts is not anybody outside but the family of the petitioner," Justice Nagaprasanna ruled, adding, "If the petitioner was not in the seat of power, the benefit of such magnitude would not have flown." "The decision of the Governor of the alleged hot haste has not vitiated the order," he added. As the judge dismissed the petition, senior counsel Abhishek Manu Singhvi, who appeared for Siddaramaiah, requested the bench to consider a stay. Justice Nagaprasannasaid, "I can't stay my own order...The petition stands dismissed."

—PTI ***>>>More on Page 2***

Omar, 239 in fray for J&K's 2nd phase

Hit by continuous terror attacks in the past 3 yrs, Rajouri, Poonch and Reasi are set to vote today. With several high-profile names, the election will see some thrilling fights. Here are the key candidates:

Omar Abdullah, NC
Seats: Ganderbal and Budgam

Abdullah is the youngest CM of J&K and LS MP. Ganderbal is NC's stronghold since 1977. He is up against Engineer Rashid's AIP candidate Sheikh Ashiq. In Budgam, Abdullah is up against 7 candidates.

Ravinder Raina, BJP
Seats: Nowshera

The BJP J&K Chief won the seat in 2014. He faces a tough fight from ex party colleague Surinder Choudhary, a former MLC now nominated by NC in this key seat from Rajouri.

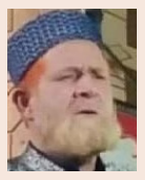
Tariq Hameed Karra, Cong
Seats: Shalteng

The President of J&K Cong won Srinagar LS polls on a PDP ticket by defeating NC's Farooq Abdullah by 40,000 votes, handing the veteran politician his first-ever electoral defeat in 4 decades. He will face PDP's Abdul Qayum Bhat in this poll.

Altaf Bukhari, J&K Apni Party
Seats: Chanpora

The former MLA and education minister is among the wealthiest candidates with assets exceeding ₹165 crore. Bukhari will face from PDP's Mohammed Iqbal Trumboo, National Conference's Mushtaq Guroo, and BJP's Hilal Ahmad Wani.

Sarjan Ahmad Wagay, Independent
Seats: Beerwah and Ganderbal



Jailed separatist leader and cleric, who was arrested for orchestrating protests over Burhan Wani's killing, filed nominations for 2 seats after his earlier nomination from the Zainpora was rejected. He was arrested in 2016, 2017 under PSA, UAPA.

>>>More on Page 3

Anil Ambani's son slapped with ₹1 cr fine by SEBI

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), on Monday, imposed a penalty of 1 crore on Jai Anmol Ambani, son of industrialist Anil Ambani for failing to exercise due diligence while approving general-purpose corporate loans (GPCLs) in the Reliance Home Finance case. The market regulator also imposed a fine of Rs 15 lakh on Krishnan Gopalakrishnan who was the former chief risk officer of Reliance Home Finance for his involvement in the approval process. Both the top officials of the company have been directed to pay the fine amount within 45 days, as per the SEBI order. In a separate development last month, the SEBI imposed a ban on businessman Anil Ambani, 3 key officials of his company and 23 companies associated with him, from trading in the stock market for a period of five years. *—ANI*

2 dead as vehicle with poll officials falls into J&K gorge

KATRA/JAMMU, 24 SEPT

Two people, including a policeman, were killed when their vehicle carrying a zonal magistrate on poll duty, plunged into a deep gorge in the Reasi of Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday, officials said. The zonal magistrate Ajay Kumar, however, escaped with minor injuries as he jumped from the vehicle before it rolled down into the 100m deep gorge near remote TUKSON-Angadi village in Mahore area around 3 pm, the officials said. They said rescuers retrieved the bodies of constable Aijaz Khan, 31, of Budhal Rajouri and driver Javed Ahmad, 30, of Khor Gulabgarh from the scene. Kumar was on his way to Gulabgarh to review the polling arrangements in the Shadole polling station area, the officials added. *—PTI*

HELPING HAND

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting in New York. This was the third meeting between Modi and Zelenskyy in 3 months ***PHOTO: PTI*** ***>>>More on Pages 3 and 6***

Actor, MLA Mukesh arrested in rape case

KOCHI, 24 SEPT

Legal actions intensified on Tuesday against two prominent Malayalam actors, Sidhique and Mukesh, as the Kerala High Court denied Sidhique's bail plea in a 2016 rape case involving a young actress, while Mukesh was arrested by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) for allegedly sexually assaulting another female actor a decade ago in Kochi.

KERALA'S ME TOO

Meanwhile, Kerala court granted anticipatory bail to Mukesh in a second case of sexual assault lodged against him in an incident that occurred in Wadakkanchery in Thrissur in 2010.

While Mukesh, a ruling CPI(M) MLA, was released on bail after his formal arrest, having already secured bail from a court in Kochi, Sidhique is reportedly on the run, prompting the police to launch a manhunt.

Before his arrest was formally recorded, Mukesh was interrogated by the Special Investigation Team for more than three hours at the Coastal Police Headquarters here. The rape complaints against both actors, along with those against a few other artists, were filed after the State Culture Ministry released selected portions of the Justice K Hema Committee report following a legal battle. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

ISRAEL STRIKE KILLS HEZBOLLAH CHIEF

BEIRUT, 24 SEPT

An Israeli airstrike on Beirut killed a senior Hezbollah commander on Tuesday as cross-border rocket attacks by both sides increased fears of a full-fledged war in the Middle East. Lebanon's Health Ministry says the death toll from the airstrikes since early Monday has reached 558, including 50 children and 94 women. Health Minister Firass Abiad told reporters on Tuesday that 1,835 people were wounded during the same period. Abiad added that four paramedics were among those killed, and 16 paramedics and firefighters were among the wounded. Israel's military said the airstrike on the Lebanese capital killed Ibrahim Qubaisi, who it said was the commander of Hezbollah's missiles and rocket force.

—Times of Israel/ AP

>>>More on Page 6

SC junks Punjab's 'fraud' NRI quota expansion

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The Supreme Court on Tuesday upheld a High Court order that quashed the Punjab government's decision to widen the ambit of 'NRI quota' in undergraduate medical admissions to include distant relatives, observing this quota expansion was a "complete fraud" which must be put to an end.

"This is nothing but a money spinning machine," observed a bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra while dismissing the State government's appeal against the verdict of the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

On 10 September, the High Court had set aside the AAP-led government's 20 August notification that expanded the NRI seat category to include distant relatives of candidates "such as uncles, aunts, grandparents, and cousins" for admissions under the 15 per cent NRI quota to medical and dental courses in State government colleges. Terming the High Court verdict "absolutely right," the Top Court said, "Look at the deleterious consequences... the candidates who have three times higher marks will lose admission (in NEET-UG courses)." *—PTI*

Supreme Court ***PHOTO: PTI***

Don't drag us in your agenda: SC to NCPCR

Supreme Court on Tuesday told NCPCR not to drag the apex court in its agenda over a plea seeking an SIT probe into cases of children allegedly sold by shelter homes in Jharkhand of the Missionaries of Charity founded by Mother Teresa. The bench dismissed the plea. NCPCR's plea sought direction for an apex court-monitored investigation of all such organisations in Jharkhand. *—PTI* ***>>>More on Page 4***

Woman cut into 59 pieces: Multiple fingerprints found

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

The investigation into the murder of 29-year-old Mahalakshmi, who was chopped into 59 pieces and stuffed inside a refrigerator in her Vyalikaval residence, has taken a critical turn. Forensic analysis has uncovered multiple fingerprints on the fridge. Experts from Forensic Science Laboratory in Bengaluru are examining the fingerprints to ascertain whether they belong solely to the main suspect or if addi-tional suspects were involved, said Shekar H Tekkannavar, Deputy Commissioner of Police for Central Bengaluru.

Mahalakshmi ***PHOTO: PTI***

This examination is pivotal in piecing together the events surrounding the crime, police said.

Vyalikaval police have brought the suspected killer's brother to Bengaluru for questioning. During a two-hour interrogation, the brother revealed that the accused had contacted him after killing Maha-lakshmi.

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Monday announced that the prime accused in the murder, identi-fied as being from West Bengal, has been located.

—Salar News

FOOD ADULTERATION ROW

UP hotels must display proprietor's name

LUCKNOW, 24 SEPT

Taking cognisance of incidents of spitting and mixing of urine in eatables in Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday directed that the name and address of operators, proprietors and managers should be mandatorily displayed at all food centres.

He also directed that chefs and waiters should wear masks and gloves besides making installation of CCTVs in hotels and restaurants mandatory. On 12 September, a purported video showing a teenager spitting on rotis while preparing them at an eatery in Saharanpur district went viral on social media, leading to the arrest of the facility's owner. Last week, a juice vendor in Ghaziabad district was arrested for allegedly serving fruit juices mixed with urine to customers. In June, two men were arrested by police in Noida for allegedly selling juice contaminated with their spits.

In view of such incidents, the Chief Minister has also given instructions for thorough investigation, verification of all hotels, dhabas, restaurants, and related establishments in the State. Concrete arrangements are necessary to prevent such incidents in Uttar Pradesh, he said, adding that by running a State-wide intensive campaign, verification of all the employees working there including the operators of these food establishments should be done.

Earlier this year, the Uttar Pradesh government had mandated it for food stalls and fruit vendors along Kanwar Yatra routes to display the names of shop owners. *—PTI*

> **Dhabas, restaurants and food establishments should be thoroughly investigated and police verification of every employee should be done to ensure the purity and sanctity of food items**
>
> -Yogi Adityanath, UP CM

There's no question of CM quitting, says Congress

'This is a conspiracy against CM, he's clean'

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Tuesday said there is no question of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah resigning over the High Court dismissing his petition challenging Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's approval for investigation against him in a site allotment case.

He alleged that there was a "big conspiracy" against the Chief Minister, as he asserted that the latter has done no wrong in the issue and will come out clean.

When questioned about BJP demanding CM's resignation over the High Court's order, Shivakumar said: "There is no question, the CM has not done anything wrong. He is not involved in any scam. It is a polit-ical conspiracy by the BJP against all opposition leaders in the country, this is what is going on."

Shivakumar, who is also the State Congress President, said he and his party stand in support of the Chief Minister, who is doing a good job for the party and the State.

"(There is a) big conspiracy against our Chief Minister, like how the BJP had hatched a big conspiracy against me by filing a case and sending me to jail. Because of God's grace I came out. The case in which I went to jail was dismissed. Similarly they have hatched a conspiracy against the Chief Minister and his family," Shivakumar said.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with DCM D K Shivakumar and cabinet ministers addressing a press meet after court hearing on MUDA issue, in Bengaluru on Tuesday *PHOTO MOHAMMED ASAD*

The BJP is unable to digest the (welfare) programmes given by Siddaramaiah to the State, Shivakumar said. "There is a big conspiracy."

Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge on Tuesday said that he was not surprised by the High Court dismiss-ing Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's plea challenging governor's sanction to prosecute him in the alleged MUDA land allotment scam.

Karnataka Minister Dinesh Gundurao on Tuesday said that the real issue involved in Governor Taawarchand Gehlot's sanction to investigate Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the alleged Mysuru Urban Development Authority scam is about the misuse of governor's office.

"CM is very confident about his innocence. We are very confident about his innocence. And whatever happens, we will face it. But here the situation is with the BJP, Opposition. *—PTI/ANI*

MUDA CHRONOLOGY

September 1992
Preliminary notification issued to acquire 3.16 acres belonging to Ninga bin Javara to form 3rd phase of Devanur Layout in Mysuru

May 1998
Land denotified from acquisition

June 2001
The denotified land is used to form Devanur Layout and sites are allotted

November 2003
Land restored in the name of the original holder

August 2004
Siddaramaiah's brother-in-law Mallikarjunaswamy purchases 3.16 acres of 'agricultural' land and converts it for non-agricultural purposes

October 2010
Mallikarjunaswamy gifts the land to his sister Parvathi, Siddaramaiah's wife

June 2014
Parvathi seeks compensation in lieu of her land being used up by MUDA

January 2022
Parvathi gets alternative sites (14 plots) in Vijayanagar 3rd phase on a 50:50 basis

14 July, 2024
State government sets up one-man inquiry commission to probe illegalities

26 July
Governor issues show-cause notice to Siddaramaiah after being petitioned by social activist TJ Abraham

24 September
Karnataka High Court dismisses Siddaramaiah's petition challenging Governor's approv-al for investigation against him

BJP demands CM's resignation after HC verdict

'Quit and make way for free investigation'

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

BJP workers on Tuesday staged protests in several parts of Karnataka demanding the resignation of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, hours after the Karnataka High Court dismissed his petition challenging Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's approval for investigation against him in a site allotment case.

The protests were organised in Siddaramaiah's home district of Mysuru, Hubballi and Belagavi, among other places, party leaders said.

Holding the party's flag, they raised slogans against Siddaramaiah asking him to step down as Chief Minister.

"In the wake of the High Court verdict, we want Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to resign from his post immediately and join the investigation," a BJP functionary said.

- The protests were organised in Siddaramaiah's home district of Mysuru, Hubballi and Belagavi, among other places, party leaders said

"The High Court has validated the action of the governor. The BJP demands that Chief Minister Sid-daramaiah tender his resignation and make way for a free and independent investigation into the allegations of shameful corruption," senior party leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar said at a press conference.

In the MUDA site allotment case, it has been alleged that compensatory sites were allotted to Sid-daramaiah's wife B M Parvathi in an upmarket area in Mysuru which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been "acquired" by the MUDA.

Chandrasekhar also hit out at the Congress and alleged that the party makes fake promises during elec-tions to come to power with the sole objective of committing corruption.

He also referred to the alleged scam in the allocation of a piece of land to a trust run by Congress pres-ident Mallikarjun Kharge's family.

"There is not one Congress leader in Karnataka today who is not involved in some land scam or the other," the former Union minister alleged. *—PTI*

COMPLAINANTS HAIL HC'S VERDICT

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

The complainants, who were granted sanction by the Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot after they sought an order for probe from the special court against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday hailed High Court's verdict dismissing his petition challenging the approval.

The petitions submitted to him by the three complainants -- Abraham TJ, Snehamayi Krishna and Pradeep Kumar SP.

"We had petitioned in the High Court seeking the dismissal of Siddaramaiah's plea. Whatever objec-tions we had filed, the order has come accordingly, which is a matter of pleasure for us," Abraham said.

When told that the Chief Minister may challenge the order in the division bench, Abraham said: "Let him challenge in the division bench. We are filing a caveat there." *—PTI*

WHY IS MUDA SCAM HUGE?

- First big scam after Congress' landslide win in 2023 Assembly election
- First scam implicating Siddaramaiah directly
- Destroys PayCM anti-graft plank raised by Congress against BJP
- Gives extra ammunition for Opposition to heighten attacks
- Puts Siddaramaiah in a spot over resigna-tion

The focus in the MUDA sitecase should be where it belongs—on #MUDA and its officials. Dragging CM Siddaramaiah into an issue he's not connected to is a sign of political desperation. BJP's tactic of misusing institutions to corner our (Cong) leaders is transparent

Mansoor Ali Khan, AICC General Secretary

The court declared there was prima facie abuse of power, with rules being blatantly violated. Siddaramaiah must resign without delay. Let us not forget how he once demanded Yediyurappa's resignation. The court declared that there was a clear abuse of power

Pralhad Joshi, Union Minister

Siddaramaiah's first misstep was purchasing Dalit land. Despite holding a position tied to the Constitution, he was aware of everything that transpired within MUDA, yet he still spoke ill of the Governor. As long as he remains in office, he could influence the investigation

Shobha Karandlaje, Union Minister

I indeed participated in the padayatra against MUDA scam. However, I have not called for anyone's resignation, and Siddaramaiah himself has Stated that he will not resign

HD Kumaraswamy, Union Minister

He is a 'clean hand' Chief Minister. We don't find a Chief Minister like this. He is a 100% clean-handed man. BJP people are the most corrupt people in India, there is no value to their words. Now, the single judge bench has upheld the Governor's permission

Ramalinga Reddy, Transport Minister

High Court's verdict has validated our party's stance and the protests. From the start, CM Siddaramaiah and Congress tried to stifle any discussions about the scandal, despite promising corruption-free governance. It also exposes the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi

BY Vijayendra, State BJP Chief

Woman booked for destroying Onam pookalam

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

A Kerala woman who had allegedly destroyed Onam pookalam (floral carpet) set up by residents of Monarch Serenity apartment complex at Hegde Nagar here has been booked by police on Tuesday. Simi Nair, a native of Pathanamthitta, was booked under Sections 329 (trespassing), 351 (intimidation) and 298 (causing emotional harm to a community) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Speaking to Salar News, Karthik Kumar, a member of residents' association, said: "We tried to reason with her in private and resolve the matter within ourselves, but she was adamant. So we filed case to teach her a lesson." *—Salar News*

Gate collapse: ₹5L to be given to boy's kin; AE suspended

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar announced Rs 5 lakh com-pensation to the family of the boy who tragically lost his life due to the collapse of a metal gate at Ra-jashankar playground in Malleshwaram. Shivakumar has also ordered the immediate suspension of As-sistant Engineer Srinivas Raju for dereliction of duty. Shivakumar said, "Further steps are being taken to suspend Assistant Executive Engineer K Shanthala, as well as officials Devaraju and Ayesha Hussain along with the Executive Engineer L Venkatesh have been issued with a show cause notice." *—Salar News*

Cafe blast: NIA chargesheets 2 for radicalisation

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday filed a charge sheet against two men for their in-volvement in radicalising Muslim youth and terror funding among other anti-national activities, accord-ing to an official Statement.

The duo have been identified as ISIS radicals, Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taaha alias Taha and Mussavir Hussain Shazib alias Shazib, who were earlier chargesheeted by the NIA in the Rameshwaram Cafe blast case, it said.

"Residents of Shivamogga district, the two men were engaged in radicalising and recruiting gullible Muslim youths, including the co-accused, in the instant case," said the Statement issued by the probe agency.

NIA filed its third supplementary charge sheet against both the radicals before a special court here. With this, 10 accused have been chargesheeted in the case.

The case, taken over by NIA from Karnataka police in November 2022, relates to the anti-India activi-ties of the proscribed terrorist organisation Islamic State (IS/ISIS), it said.

"The accused were involved in violent activities like arson, trial explosions and burning of the Indian national flag, in addition to radicalisation, recruitment, terror funding, as part of the IS conspiracy to spread terror and destabilise the nation," the Statement said.

Investigations in the case, originally filed in September 2022 by the State police, are ongoing, it added. *—PTI*

Security personnel stand guard at the Rameshwaram cafe blast site, in Bengaluru *PHOTO: PTI*

3 HELD IN ALLEGED KOPPAL STABBING INCIDENT

KOPPAL, 24 SEPT

The Koppal police have arrested three people in an alleged stabbing case in the Gundamma locality here, police said on Tuesday.

Police officials said that a fight broke out in Gundamma locality in Koppal, leading to three people sus-taining injuries and a complaint being filed against nine people.

According to Koppal Superintendent of Police Ram Arasiddi, a scuffle broke out on Monday due to per-sonal enmity between two groups.

One of the injured Shivakumar stays in Gundamma locality.

"A Ganesha procession was taken out peacefully on Monday by a group in the Gundamma camp. In an isolated incident, a fight broke out in the same camp in which Shivakumar, and two others were in-jured," the police official said.

The police have confirmed that the area is peaceful now, with no further incidents. A complaint was filed by a local Manjunath. *—ANI*

BJP's Munirathna sent to 12-day SIT custody

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

BJP MLA Munirathna has been remanded in the custody of Special Investigation Team (SIT) for 12 days in connection with a rape case filed against him. After 42nd ACMM Court in Bengaluru ordered the cus-tody till 5 October, an SIT team brought the RR Nagar MLA from Parappana Agrahara Jail to the CID office for questioning.

An FIR was lodged at Kaggalipura police station, accusing Munirathna of repeated rape and blackmail between 2020 and 2022. The victim, in her complaint, alleged that Munirathna initially contacted her during the COVID-19 pandemic, acknowledging her social service efforts and that their friendship soon developed into frequent video calls. The situation escalated when Munirathna allegedly asked the vic-tim to make a naked video call, which she refused. The complaint states that Munirathna coerced her into meeting him at a godown, where he made sexual advances, justifying his actions by saying such behaviour was common in politics.

Munirathna *PHOTO: FB*

The victim further claimed that Munirathna secretly recorded their encounters and used the footage to blackmail her. He allegedly threatened to release the videos if she did not comply with his demands, going so far as to involve another woman in a honey-trap. The victim said she was raped repeatedly.

Munirathna has denied the allegations, claiming that the accusations were politically motivated and aimed at defaming him. He argued that no case was registered during the past five years, suggesting that the timing of the complaint was linked to political differences during recent elections. *—Salar News*

State gets 1st gas-based power plant

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah along with Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Energy Minister KJ George, inaugurated Karnataka's first gas-based power plant – the 370 MW Yelahanka Combined Cycle Power Plant (YCCPP) on Monday.

This milestone project, developed by Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL), marks a significant leap in the State's energy infrastructure. The plant, a first of its kind in Karnataka, is set to play a vital role in addressing the growing energy demands of Bengaluru, providing much-needed power stability for the City.

During the inauguration, Siddaramaiah announced a one-time bonus of Rs. 5,000 for all employees at the Yelahanka Power Plant, following a similar gesture made during the dedication of the Bellary Thermal Power Plant.

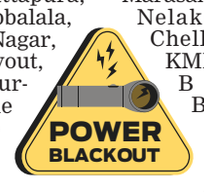
The plant, with an overall project cost of Rs. 2,500 crore and an engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) cost of Rs. 1,255 crore, will generate 2,755 million units annually at 85 percent plant load factor. The EPC contractor for the project is Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), and the plant will use liquified natural gas supplied by GAIL. This project is expected to eliminate power cuts and meet City's growing energy needs for years to come. —Salar News

Brace for power disruptions today, tomorrow

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

Bengaluru Electricity Supply Company (BESCOM) has announced scheduled power cuts in parts of the City due to emergency maintenance work conducted by Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Lim-ited (KPTCL). The power supply interruptions will affect Jayanagar, Hebbal divisions on Wednesday and Thursday.

On 25 September, between 10am and 2pm, power will be disrupted in the following areas under the 5th sub-division of Jayanagar: Mantri Apartment, Talaghattapura, Raghuvanahalli, Gubbalala, Kuvempunagar, VV Nagar, VV Layout, Balaji Layout, Royal Farm and surrounding areas. The disruption is due to urgent maintenance at ISKCON sub-centre.



Similarly, on 26 September, Hebbal division will experience power outages from 10am to 4pm. Areas include Honnenahalli, Singanayakanahalli, Rajanakunte, Adivishwanathapura, Marasandra, Srirama-nahalli, Nelakunte, Haniyur, Chellahalli, Karlapur, KMF, Itagalpura, Arkeri, Bairapura, Budamanahalli, Dibburu, Kakolu, Sonnenahalli, Century Layout, PGL and surrounding areas of the C7 sub-division.

Other affected areas include Kavalabairasandra, LR Bande Main Road, Gandhinagar, Chinnanna Layout, Ambedkar Layout, Anwar Layout, Kaveri Nagar, Ambedkar Medical College, Sultan Palya, Rankanagar, Kanakanagar, KHB Main Road, Bhubaneswari Nagar, DGA Halli, KJ Halli, KJ Colony, Adarsh Nagar, V Na-genahalli, Periyar Nagar, Periyar Circle, Shampura, Kushala Nagar, Modi Road, Modi Garden, Doddanna Nagar, Muniveerappa Layout, Sugar Mandi, Salt Mandi, and Muneshwar Nagar.

—Salar News

PHOTO: PTI

500 militants lay down arms before Tripura CM

AGARTALA, 24 SEPT

Around 500 militants belonging to outlawed groups National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) on Tuesday laid down arms before Chief Minister Manik Saha. While welcoming the militants to the mainstream at a function in Jampuijala in Sepahijala district, the Chief Minister asserted that militancy is not the solution to any problem. He also declared the northeastern State "completely militancy free" after the mass surrender. "The Centre and the state have been working for the overall development of indigenous people by launching different schemes. I welcome those who have shunned the path of violence and joined the mainstream," Saha said. *—PTI*

Murmu calls for timely audit of public finance

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Underscoring the importance of timelines in auditing public finance, President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday said if a wrong is pointed out well within time, it can be corrected and help save huge amount of public money. She emphasised the need for audit bodies keeping pace with technological evolution in order to be able to perform its oversight functions effectively as more and more public services are being delivered using technology. "What is equally important for effective auditing of public finances is timeliness. If a wrong is pointed out well within time, it can be corrected," she said while addressing the 16th Assembly of Asian Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions here. *—PTI*

Delhi women likely to get ₹1,000 honorium

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The Aam Aadmi Party government in Delhi is likely to implement its ambitious scheme for providing Rs 1,000 monthly honorarium to women after the Haryana Assembly polls, officials here said on Tuesday. The paperwork for the scheme named 'Mukhya Mantri Mahila Samman Yojna' is almost complete and it could be presented in the first Cabinet meeting of Atishi government expected to be held "very soon", they said. The proposal of the scheme has to be sent to departments concerned including finance, law and revenue for their comments after which it will be sent for Cabinet nod, they said. The preparation to roll out the scheme has picked up pace with Kejriwal out of jail, and Atishi taking charge as chief minister after his resignation, the officials said. The scheme will be implemented before the Delhi elections due in February, as the budget for the scheme has been already allocated, he said. *—PTI*

VHP vows to free temples from govt control

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The Vishva Hindu Parishad on Tuesday vowed to free temples from government control across the country and said it will soon launch a nationwide campaign to achieve this goal. Addressing a press conference here, VHP joint general secretary Surendra Jain asserted that the organisation will also approach the court if state governments do not hand over the temples to Hindu society. "From today it is our resolve to free temples from government control across the country and hand them over to the society. "For this, first demonstrations and agitations will be held in every state and our memorandum will be submitted to the governors through the respective chief ministers," he said. *—PTI*

Omar, Raina, Karra key players in J&K polls

2nd phase voting will take place from 7 am-6 pm

SRINAGAR, 24 SEPT

Over 2.5 million voters will decide the fate of 239 candidates in the fray for 26 Jammu and Kashmir Assembly seats in the second phase of the election to be held in the Union territory on Wednesday.

Voting will take place from 7 am to 6 pm. These Assembly constituencies are spread over six districts – three in the Valley and as many in the Jammu division. "To facilitate smooth and hassle-free electoral participation, the Election Commission of India has established 3,502 polling stations in these segments. There are 1,056 urban polling stations and 2,446 rural polling stations," an official said.

Several checkpoints have been established to monitor movements and prevent any unlawful activities. The police and paramilitary forces are working together to secure polling stations and maintain law and order in the region.

Omar Abdullah, Ravinder Raina and Tariq Hamid Karra PHOTO: PTI

Key names in the fray for this phase are former chief minister Omar Abdullah, JKPCC President Tariq Hamid Karra and BJP J&K chief Ravinder Raina. Abdullah is contesting from the Ganderbal and Budgam seats, while Karra is contesting from Central Shalteng. Raina will be trying to retain his Nowshera seat in Rajouri district.

The second phase will be watched keenly as jailed separatist leader Sarjan Ahmad Wagay alias Barkati is hoping to repeat Engineer Rashid's Lok Sabha poll feat against the National Conference leader. Barkati is contesting from the Beerwah and Ganderbal segments.

Popularly known as Rashid Engineer, Sheikh Abdul Rashid contested the parliamentary polls held earlier this year from Tihar jail and still managed to defeat Abdullah. *—PTI*

Hoarding businesses thrive

There has been a "remarkable boom" in the hoarding and printing business in Kashmir during these assembly elections, local traders have said, underlining that the trend shows wider participation in the democratic exercise in Jammu and Kashmir where polls are often marred by boycott calls. Local entrepreneurs say the demand for election banners, flags has surged to the levels never seen before. *—PTI*

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal addresses the crowd during a roadshow in support of party candidate Harpinder Singh ahead of Haryana Assembly elections, at Rania in Sirsa district of Haryana PHOTO: PTI

Was jailed so BJP could tag me as 'chor': Kejri in Haryana

CHANDIGARH, 24 SEPT

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday stepped up his attack on BJP-led Centre, alleging he was arrested as the ruling party wanted to project him as a "chor" (thief) but even his "fiercest enemy" believes he is not corrupt.

The former Delhi chief minister held a roadshow in the Rania Assembly constituency in Haryana's Sirsa in favour of AAP nominee Harpinder Singh for the 5 October state Assembly polls. Kejriwal resigned as the chief minister of Delhi after being released from the Tihar Jail last week following his bail in the excise policy case by the Supreme Court. AAP leader Atishi later took oath as the chief minister of the national capital.

"What was my fault? My fault is being the chief minister of Delhi for 10 years, I set up good government schools for children of the poor," Kejriwal said. Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi alleged that BJP has done "grave injustice" to the youth of the country, including in Haryana, by snatching employment opportunities and forced them to undertake a "journey of torture" to foreign countries. He made the remarks as he shared on social media a video of his recent interaction in the US with some immigrants from Haryana who talked about the unemployment back home forcing them to move to the US and face struggles in a foreign country.

In his post in Hindi accompanying the video, Gandhi said, "Why did the youth of Haryana turn to Dunki?" "Dunki" is a term given to the illegal immigration technique of taking 'donkey flights'.

Also, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also alleged BJP has spread such an "epidemic of unemployment" that the lives of youths are being ruined. On the other hand, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini launched an attack on Congress accusing the party of loot and fraud and exuded confidence in the Bharatiya Janata Party winning the Haryana Assembly elections. *—PTI/ ANI*

Badlapur encounter: Family cries foul; parties lock horns

THANE, 24 SEPT

The family members of Badlapur sexual assault case accused Akshay Shinde have challenged the police claim that he fired at a policeman first following which cops fired in self-defence which led to his death.

His family members have challenged the theory that Shinde fired at the policeman first and later the cops retaliated. Shinde's father Anna Shinde said an inquiry should be conducted into his son's killing. His mother and uncle alleged it was a conspiracy by police and management of the Badlapur school. The case is accused booked.

They claimed Akshay had told his kin that he was being beaten up police in custody and he also sent a chit seeking money. His mother and uncle questioned the police version and asserted he could not have snatched the weapon of a policeman. "The police have killed our child. The school management must also be probed. The police got him to write something but we don't know what it is, only he knew it," the kin further alleged.

Shiv Sena workers also bursted firecrackers and distributed sweets to celebrate the death of the accused in the Badlapur sexual assault case. Pramod Bhangire, Pune Chief of the Shiv Sena, said they celebrated by bursting firecrackers and distributing `pedha' sweets outside the party office to boost the morale of state police.

BJP termed the case accused by police as "God's justice" and accused the Opposition of speaking the language of "urban Naxals" by doubting the incident.

CID to investigate the case

Crime Investigation Department (CID) will conduct a probe into the death of Badlapur sexual assault case accused Akshay Shinde, officials said on Tuesday. *—PTI*

Cash for vote: T'gana CM summoned on 16 Oct

HYDERABAD, 24 SEPT

A city court on Tuesday directed Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to appear before it on 16 October in connection with the 2015 cash-for-vote case, in which he is one of the accused.

The court of Metropolitan Sessions Judge, directed Reddy and five others accused to be present as part of a hearing for consideration of charges in the case in connection with the money laundering probe by the Enforcement Directorate in the alleged cash-for-vote scam.

The fourth accused in the case was present in court on Tuesday, while others accused including Chief Minister Reddy, were absent and their presence was dispensed with petitions (seeking exemption from appearing). *—PTI*

PURIFIED DONE

Tirumala devotees can set aside fears about laddu: TTD

Priests perform Shanti Homam at Tirumala Temples PHOTO: ANI

TIRUPATI, 23 SEPT

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) executive officer J Shyamala Rao on Monday said here that devotees can set aside their apprehensions regarding laddus at the temple as the sanctity of the 'prasadams' have been restored with a four-hour purification ritual.

The ritual was aimed at propitiating Lord Venkateswara Swamy from the alleged sacrilegious practices such as mixing animal fats in making Tirupati laddus and others.

The quality of laddus at the Tirupati temple came under national spotlight after Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu recently claimed that substandard ingredients and animal fats were used in making the laddus under the previous YSRCP government. YSRCP chief Jagan Mohan Reddy has denied all charges.

According to the temple body, Shanti Homam was conducted as per the tenets of 'Vaikhanasa Agama' in the 'Yagashala' (ritual place) of Tirumala temple from 6 am to 10 am to ward off the ill effects, and restore the sanctity of laddu prasadams and other naivedyams (food offerings to deity) along with the well-being of Srivari (deity) devotees.

On Tuesday, Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Tuesday held former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy responsible for the "contamination" of the Tirupati Laddu Prasadam. Kalyan said that he is ready to die for Sanatana Dharma, and he will have no restrictions in the country if he must fight for it.

Tamil actor Karthi apologised to Kalyan on social media after the Chief Minister excoriated him for his comments on the controversy. On 23 September, Karthi said, "We should not talk about laddu now." Also famous actor Prakash Raj said he wants to meet Kalyan for one-on-one conversation ovr the controversy. *—PTI/ANI*

14 lakh laddus sold in 4 days

Amid the growing row over animal fat in Tirupati laddus, the sale of it at Sri Venkateshwara Temple has draws over 60,000 pilgrims daily. Temple administration reported that over 14 lakh Tirupati laddoos have been sold over four day from 19 to 22 September. The average sales of laddoos is said to be 3.50 lakh daily. *— Agencies*

Prefer Mishri, dry fruits: Seers' body

The Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad on Tuesday said mishri, cardamon seeds and dry fruits offered traditionally to the Hindu deities as 'bhog' should be distributed among devotees as prasad at temples instead of prepared delicacies such as laddu to prevent adulteration.The statement comes amid outrage over the laddu row at Tirupati Temple. *—PTI*

MK Stalin PHOTO: PTI

TN CM STALIN HINTS AT UDHAYANIDHI'S ELEVATION

CHENNAI, 24 SEPT

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Tuesday indicated that Sports Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin will be elevated as Deputy Chief Minister and also hinted at Cabinet reshuffle.

When reporters asked Stalin on reshuffle and 'Dy CM post for Udhayanidhi' being spoken for quite some time, he answered in a few words. He said: "There will be no disappointment; there will be change." To another question, the CM said the government is prepared to tackle the Northeast monsoon and the state Chief Secretary has already held discussions with top officials and he will also deliberate with officials.

On Opposition demanding a white paper on investments secured druing his US visit, the CM said Industries Minister TRB Rajaa has already issued a statement and 'that is by itself is a white paper.' During Stalin's US tour, in total, the state government inked pacts totally worth Rs 7,616 crore with 18 companies.

When he embarked on US tour last month to attract investments to the state and immediately following his return on 14 September, Stalin has already hinted twice on the likelihood of a cabinet reshuffle. A larger role for his son and party youth wing secretary Udhayanidhi in the government is being anticipated by party cadres. *—PTI*

3RD MEETING IN 3 MONTHS

Modi reaffirms India's support to Ukraine

NEW YORK, 24 SEPT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is deeply concerned by the war in Ukraine and his meeting with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy here demonstrates his commitment to finding a way forward and contributing in any way possible to a resolution of the conflict, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said.

Modi on Monday held a bilateral meeting with Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the UN's Summit of the Future before wrapping up his three-day visit to the US.

Misri said the meeting requested by the Ukrainian side "accordingly took place". The meeting between Modi and Zelenskyy, which lasted for about 45 minutes, was the last bilateral engagement of the day for the Prime Minister as he wrapped up his visit to the US during which he attended the Quad Leaders' Summit.

Misri said there was some discussion about arranging a meeting of the Inter-governmental Commission, headed at the levels of foreign ministers of the two countries.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy with PM Modi PHOTO: PTI

- Modi on Monday held a bilateral meeting with Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the UN's Summit of the Future before wrapping up his three-day visit to the US.

"Our voice in support of peace and path through dialogue and diplomacy is not new one. It's natural for us to assume this role. I think the Prime Minister's meeting with Zelenskyy also reflects his own, in a sense, commitment to this effort because he is deeply concerned by this conflict," Misri said.

Misri, briefing the media after the conclusion of the prime minister's visit to the US, said the meeting gave an opportunity to take stock again of recent developments.

"The main focus of our conversation was on enhancing our interaction on international platforms, particularly at the UN and G20, as well as implementing the Peace Formula and preparing for the second Peace Summit. We had a substantive discussion on the available opportunities,"

Misri said both sides appreciated that there was a "positive momentum" on a lot of issues in the bilateral relationship and the two leaders agreed to remain in close touch.

"Zelenskyy was very appreciative of India's attention to these issues and said that the prime minister's visit had been highly appreciated," Misri said.

In response to a question on whether there was an acceptance of India's argument that the import of Russian oil does not translate into furthering Moscow's war effort, Misri said: "That did not figure in the discussions today." *—PTI*

Jail returned Anubrata vows to stick with Didi

BOLPUR, 24 SEPT

Trinamool Congress leader Anubrata Mondal, who returned to his home in West Bengal's Birbhum district on Tuesday morning after spending over two years in Tihar Jail in connection with several cases, expressed his unwavering support for party supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Mondal was greeted by his supporters with blowing of traditional conch shells, beating of drums and smearing of green-coloured 'gulaal' as he reached his home in Nichupatti area of Bolpur town.

He expressed affection for Banerjee: "I was with Didi and will always remain with her. I convey my Durga Puja greetings to her."

Sources, however, said that there is a possibility that Banerjee, who is scheduled to visit Bolpur for a meeting and to assess the flood situation, may meet the TMC strongman who is regarded as her close confidante. She often refers to Mondal by his nickname 'Keshto'.

Anubrata Mondal PHOTO: PTI

Mondal was the TMC president in Birbhum, and during his absence after his arrest in August 2022, no new president was appointed. A core team was overseeing the party's activities.

The Supreme Court granted Anubrata Mondal bail in July this year on condition that he would surrender his passport and cooperate with the CBI.

However, he remained in Tihar Jail due to a parallel Enforcement Directorate (ED) investigation into an alleged cattle smuggling scam. *—PTI*

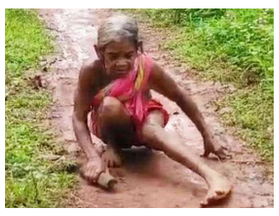


PHOTO: X/@JOURNOSIDDHANT

70-yr-old woman crawls 2km to get pension in Odisha

KEONJHAR, 24 SEPT

A 70-year-old woman in Odisha's Keonjhar district was forced to crawl nearly two kilometres from her home to the panchayat office to collect her old-age pension. The ailing woman Pathuri Dehury, a resident of Raisuan gram panchayat, cannot walk. A video of Dehury crawling on a village road has gone viral on social media. The state government earlier issued a directive to officials to deliver the pension of elderly and disabled beneficiaries to their doorstep. Dehury, however, said a panchayat official had asked her to visit the office to collect the monthly pension and she had to crawl to reach there on Saturday. The gram panchayat concerned is under Telkoi block in Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's home district Keonjhar. *—PTI*

Rifle, grenades seized in Manipur

IMPHAL, 24 SEPT

A self-loading rifle and several grenades and RPG shells have been seized in Manipur's Bishnupur district, a police statement issued on Tuesday said. During search and area domination exercises in Machin Mano hills of the district, the police seized the firearm and explosives on Monday. An SLR with a magazine, two rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) shells, two RPG shell chargers, three HE-36 hand grenades and a Chinese hand grenade have been seized, it said. More than 200 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kukis in Manipur since May last year. *—PTI*

Teen stabbed to death for denying treat to his friends

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

A 16-year-old boy was stabbed to death allegedly by three of his friends in East Delhi's Shakarpur when he refused to give them a treat after buying a new phone, police said on Tuesday. They said three juveniles, all aged 16 years and students of Class 9, have been apprehended. Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Apoorva Gupta said a patrol team spotted blood stains on a street near Ramji Samosa shop in Shakarpur around 7.15 pm on Monday and conducted an enquiry. She said local people informed the team that a group of boys had stabbed one boy, who was taken to the LNJP Hospital. The victim is Sachin, 16, who lived nearby, the official said, adding that the incident occurred in full public view. added. *—PTI*

IIMA starts reservation in PhD admissions

AHMEDABAD, 24 SEPT

Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA) has announced that it will implement reservation in the PhD admissions from 2025 as per the "government guidelines". There was no further elaboration from the premier business school on how the quota system will be implemented. Notably, the IIMA informed the Gujarat High Court last year that it may implement reservation for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes (OBCs), as well as disabled candidates in doctoral programmes from 2025. The institute was then replying to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed in the HC in 2021 by Anil Wagde, a Global IIM Alumni Network member, who had sought the implementation of reservation in the institute's PhD programmes. *—PTI*

NIA to probe sabotage of railway tracks: Vaishnaw

India has seen a surge in sabotage of rly tracks since Aug

JAIPUR, 24 SEPT

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Tuesday said the railway administration is on alert for potential train sabotage bids and is holding talks with authorities and police in several states to prevent any untoward incident.

The Central government treats security threats with the utmost seriousness and strict action will be taken against anyone attempting to sabotage trains, he told reporters at the Jaipur airport.

Vaishnaw arrived here on Tuesday to inspect a Kavach-fitted train to check the efficiency of the automatic train protection system at Sawai Madhopur.

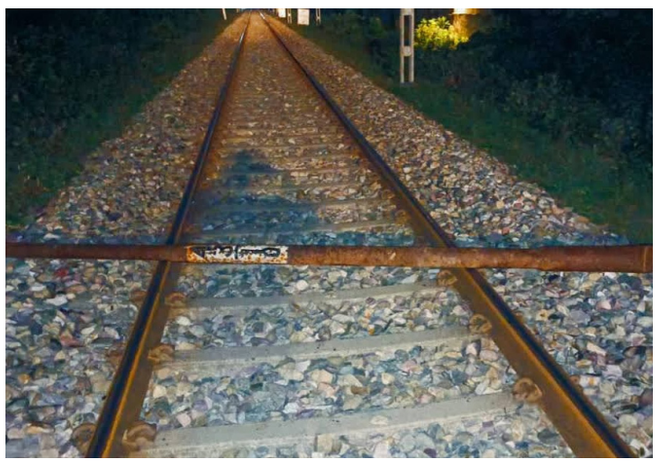
He boarded the Kavach-fitted engine of the train at 4pm at the Sawai Madhopur railway station and travel for 45 minutes up to the Indargarh station. The Kavach system, also known as an Automatic Train Protection System (ATP), has been developed by the Research Designs and Standards Organisation, and it can apply brakes automatically in an emergency when a train driver fails to act in time.

He has been working on this project for the last eight years to bring the rail network under the Kavach system in a phased manner.

Meanwhile, three railway employees have been arrested for allegedly conspiring to derail a train near Surat's Kim railway station by removing fishplates and keys from a railway track.

The attempted train derailment incident was thwarted on Saturday, the police said.

According to Western Railway, Vadodara Division unidentified people opened the fishplate and some keys from the UP line track and put them on the same track near the Kim railway station. However, service was soon restored. *—PTI*



Three railway employees were arrested for allegedly conspiring to derail a train near Surat's Kim railway station **PHOTO: PTI**

> **The administration is working hard to ensure that no such incidents are repeated and that we can track down the offenders**
>
> -Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Minister

Stones thrown at 2 trains in UP

Stones were allegedly thrown at Mahabodhi Express and Seemanchal Express trains in Uttar Pradesh, with officials on Tuesday saying probes have been launched in both the cases. Both the incidents took place on Monday in Mirzapur and Prayagraj districts, under the Northern Central Railway (NCR) region, they said. *—PTI*

Goods train derails in WB

Five wagons of an empty goods train derailed at New Maynaguri railway station in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri on Tuesday, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) officials said. No injuries were reported in the incident that occurred at 6.20 am, they said. *—PTI*

'NO PREVAILING THREAT'

Unnao rape: Centre moves SC to end victim's CPRF cover

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Supreme Court on Tuesday sought responses from the 2017 Unnao rape survivor and her family members on the Centre's plea seeking withdrawal of CRPF security cover provided to them following the court's order in 2019. Expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar is serving a life term for kidnapping and raping the minor girl in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao area in 2017.

Taking note of the sensational rape case and the threat to lives of the survivor and others, the apex court on 1 August, 2019, directed that the rape survivor, her mother, other members of the family and their lawyer be provided CRPF security.

The bench also observed that since there is hardly any threat perception, it would like to close the case.

The Centre's counsel said no security cover is needed according to the threat analysis of the victim and her family members.

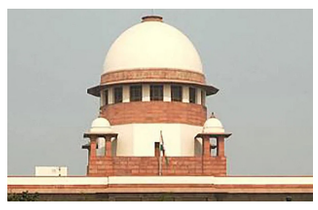
Advocate Ruchira Goel, appearing for the Uttar Pradesh government, submitted that everything, including the trial, was transferred to Delhi after the incident following the apex court's order.

The bench was informed that the woman and her family stay in Delhi.

The Centre submitted that the security cover may be provided by either the Delhi or Uttar Pradesh police and the CRPF be permitted to withdraw.

In 2019, the top court transferred all five cases registered in connection with the Unnao rape incident from a Lucknow court to a court in Delhi with the direction to hold trial on daily basis and complete it within 45 days.

The Supreme Court also directed the Uttar Pradesh government to provide Rs 25 lakh as interim compensation to the rape survivor. *—PTI*



Supreme Court **PHOTO: PTI**

Man rapes girl in MP; victim in ICU

Police arrested a man on Tuesday for raping a nine-year-old girl at a village in Madhya Pradesh's Morena, officials said. After the incident on Monday, the girl was found lying unconscious at an agricultural field outside the village, located under Nagra police station limits, where she had gone to graze goats owned by her family, according to police officials.

Nurse molested at gunpoint in UP

A construction worker and his associate molested a nursing student at gunpoint inside a college in Shahjahanpur. One accused has been arrested while the other is at large. On Monday, Suresh Kumar, 35, a tile contractor, and his partner Anmol, caught the student in the washroom and molested her. "When the student tried to protest and shout, Suresh gagged her mouth and pointed a gun at her," police said.

ACTOR ABSCONDING

HC dismisses actor Sidhique's anticipatory bail plea in rape case

JAIPUR, 24 SEPT

Kerala High Court on Tuesday rejected the anticipatory bail plea of Malayalam film actor Sidhique in a rape case against him, saying that in view of the seriousness of the accusations he was facing, his custodial interrogation was inevitable for proper investigation of the crime. Sidhique is reportedly absconding and A team from the Kerela police is currently on the lookout for him.

Justice CS Dias said that since Sidhique's defence was "a total denial of the incident", his potency test was yet to be conducted and there being a "reasonable apprehension" that he may intimidate witnesses and tamper with evidence, "it was not a fit case to exercise the discretionary powers of the court" to grant him the relief.

The High Court, however, made it clear that observations made by it in the order shall not be construed as an expression of the merits of the case.

Sidhique, who was booked for offences under sections 376 (rape) and 506 (criminal intimidation), has claimed in his plea that the complainant female actor, had subjected him to a "prolonged campaign of harassment and false accusations since 2019".

In his anticipatory bail plea, he further claimed that she had repeatedly, for the past five years, made unsubstantiated and false claims of sexual misbehaviour and 'verbal sexual offers' by him in a theatre in 2016. "But now she has raised totally contradictory allegation of more serious crime of rape at a different place in the same year," he had said in his plea. *—PTI*

Sidhique **PHOTO: PTI**

HIZB-UT-TAHRIR CASE: NIA RAIDS 11 PLACES IN TN

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted searches at multiple locations across Tamil Nadu on Tuesday as part of its probe into an "anti-election campaign" promoted by the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, a pan-Islamist organisation seeking to establish Islamic rule in the country, an official statement said.

NIA raided the houses of 11 suspects in Chennai, Tambaram and Kanyakumari, and seized incriminating materials belonging to the Hizb-ut-Tahrir. NIA said the searches were conducted in case related to causing and creating disaffection through social media handles and campaigning against the exercise of the electoral franchise. *—PTI*

Pulwama terror accused dies of heart attack in J&K

JAMMU, 24 SEPT

A 32-year-old man chargesheeted in the deadly terror attack on a CRPF convoy in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district five years ago has died of a heart attack in the Government Medical College Hospital here, officials said.

Bilal Ahmad Kuchey of Kakapora's Hajibal village was among 19 people formally charged in the case.

Forty CRPF personnel were killed and eight more injured when a terrorist of the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad rammed his explosive-laden car into a convoy in Pulwama's Lethpora on 14 February, 2019.

According to officials, Kuchey was hospitalised on 17 September after he fell sick at the Kishtwar jail. He died of a heart attack on Monday night, they added.

Kuchey and 18 other accused in the case were chargesheeted by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on 25 August, 2020. He was among the seven accused arrested in the case. He and the other accused Shakir Bashir, Insha Jan and Peer Tariq Ahmad Shah had provided logistics and harboured the JeM terrorists in their homes.

While six terrorists, including three Pakistanis, involved in the terror attack were killed in separate encounters. *—PTI*

Bilal Ahmad Kuchey of Kakapora's Hajibal village was among 19 people formally charged in the case **PHOTO: PTI**

Hindu grps call for Gwalior bandh over B'desh match

GWALIOR, 24 SEPT

Hindu Mahasabha called for a bandh in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior on 6 October to oppose the India-Bangladesh cricket match scheduled here next month in protest against "atrocities" on Hindus in the neighbouring country.

A T20 match is scheduled between India and Bangladesh in Gwalior on 6 October.

The Hindu Mahasabha is opposing the India-Bangladesh match to be held here on 6 October, the outfit's national vice president Jaiveer Bharadwaj told reporters here on Monday.

He claimed that "atrocities" on Hindus were still going on in Bangladesh and it was not right to play cricket with Bangladesh.

The Hindu Mahasabha has given a call for 'Gwalior Bandh' on the day of the match and there will be no ban on essential commodities, he said.

Meanwhile, elaborate security arrangements have been made for the India-Bangladesh second Test match to be played at the International Green Park stadium, a senior official said on Tuesday.

An FIR was filed against 20 members of the Akhilesh Bhartiya Hindu Mahasabha on Monday for allegedly organising a 'havan' by obstructing the road before the stadium to protest against atrocities on Hindus in Bangladesh, said ACP Harish Chander.

Police said a "fool-proof" security plan has been chalked out for India and Bangladesh cricket teams which are supposed to arrive here by Tuesday evening. *—PTI*

Goa inundated after heavy rains, red alert on

PANAJI, 24 SEPT

Goa witnessed heavy rains overnight which led to waterlogging at several places in the coastal state on Tuesday morning.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a 'red' alert for Goa on Tuesday, saying heavy rainfall was very likely at a few places.

Also, very heavy rainfall with extremely heavy showers were very likely with winds gusting to 40-50 kmph at isolated places over North Goa and South Goa, it added.

The IMD has issued an 'orange' alert for Wednesday and a 'yellow' alert for Thursday.

Several low-lying areas in North Goa district, including Sanquelim and Bicholim, were inundated since Tuesday morning. Some locals shared videos on social media showing the Valvanti river, which runs through Sanquelim town, in spate.

As per IMD data, Canacona taluka witnessed the highest 67.2 mm rainfall on Monday, followed by Dabolim-34.4 mm, Mormugao-27.6 mm and Sanguem-17 mm. All these talukas areas are located in South Goa district. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@ITS_RAJI

UP man beaten with shoes for sharing woman's pvt pic

BAREILLY, 24 SEPT

In western Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly, all it took were a few rounds of shoe-beatings for a local panchayat to absolve a man accused of sharing obscene pictures of a young woman with her suitors, impacting her chances of marriage.

The incident involved the 22-year-old man and the 18-year-old woman, who were both related to each other. Upon knowing the man's acts, the woman's family called for a panchayat to resolve the matter in Hardua Kifayat Ullah village of the Nawabganj block, locals said.

The panchayat decided to resolve the matter considering the young man's future, but the woman's mother insisted on punishing him first, Gangwar said.

- The panchayat believed that if the matter went to the police, the young man's future would be ruined, so it was best to resolve it within the village, a local said.

The panchayat believed that if the matter went to the police, the young man's future would be ruined, so it was best to resolve it within the village, an elderly local said.

Hardua village head Afsana said, "In the panchayat itself, the victim had put a condition that she will not forgive the man until she hits him with her slippers. Her mother hit him with her slippers after the panchayat and the man agreed." *—PTI*

IN-CHAMBERS REVIEW

SC to review quota sub-division verdict

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Supreme Court is scheduled to consider in-chambers on Tuesday a batch of pleas seeking review of its judgement which held that states are constitutionally empowered to make sub-classifications within the Scheduled Castes, which form a socially heterogeneous class, for granting reservation.

As per the cause list, a seven-judge Constitution bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices BR Gavai, Vikram Nath, Bela Trivedi, Pankaj Mithal, Manoj Misra and Satish Chandra Sharma is likely to take up the matter at 1.35 pm.

On 1 August, the top court had held that states are constitutionally empowered to make sub-classifications within the Scheduled Castes, which form a socially heterogeneous class, for granting reservation for the uplift of castes that are socially and educationally more backward.

A seven-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Chandrachud, by a majority of 6:1, set aside the apex court's five-judge bench verdict of 2004 in the EV Chinnaiah vs State of Andhra Pradesh case which had held that no sub-classification of Scheduled Castes (SCs) can be allowed as they are a homogeneous class in themselves.

Except for Justice Trivedi, the other five judges concurred with the findings of the CJI.

A dispute over sub-classification arose after certain states, including Punjab, made laws to sub-classify SCs to grant more quota benefits to certain castes.

The top court had reserved the verdict on 8 February on pleas seeking review of the Chinnaiah judgement, which had ruled all SCs which suffered ostracisation, discrimination and humiliation for centuries represented a homogeneous class incapable of being sub-categorised. *—PTI*

On 1 August, SC had held that states are constitutionally empowered to make sub-classifications within the Scheduled Castes **PHOTO: PTI**

BUILDING BACK STRONG

Great Mosque of Tinmel had been undergoing a massive reconstruction project when an earthquake shook Morocco's High Atlas mountains. September 2023 quake left a path of destruction that will take Morocco years to recover from. It killed nearly 3,000 people, knocked down almost 60,000 homes and leveled at least 585 schools. The damage will cost about USD 12.3 billion to rebuild, according to government estimates. Officials have issued more than 55,000 reconstruction permits to build new homes
PHOTO: @SMARTNEWS

Israel & Lebanon head towards a full-blown war

The past week has seen a rapid escalation in the nearly yearlong conflict between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah. First came two days of exploding pagers and walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah — deadly attacks pinned on Israel that also maimed civilians across Lebanon.

Hezbollah's leader vowed to retaliate, and on Friday the militant group launched a wave of rockets into northern Israel. Later in the day, the commander of Hezbollah's most elite unit was killed in a strike in Beirut that killed dozens more people.

The cross-border attacks ramped up early Sunday, with Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed Shiite group that is Lebanon's most powerful armed force, launching more than 100 rockets deeper into northern Israel, with some landing near the city of Haifa. Israel launched hundreds of strikes on Lebanon.

Then, on Monday, Israel launched a series of strikes that killed more than 490 Lebanese, the deadliest attack since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war. Israel warned residents in southern and eastern Lebanon to leave their homes ahead of a spreading air campaign against Hezbollah.

Israel and Hezbollah have launched repeated strikes against each other since the Gaza war began, but both sides have pulled back when the spiral of reprisals appeared on the verge of getting out of control, under heavy pressure from the US and its allies.

What were latest strikes?

More than 1,600 Lebanese were injured in Monday's deadly strikes and thousands more fled southern Lebanon. Israel said it was targeting Hezbollah weapons sites, and had hit some 1,600 targets. Lebanon's health minister said hospitals, medical centres and ambulances had been struck.

The Israeli military warned residents to immediately leave areas where Hezbollah is stoing weapons. The Lebanese media said the evacuation warning was repeated in text messages.

Israel and Hezbollah have launched repeated strikes against each other since the Gaza war began
PHOTO: PTI

Hezbollah said it had fired dozens of rockets toward Israel, including at military bases, and officials said a series of air-raid sirens were ringing out in northern Israel warning of rocket attacks.

What is the situation on the border?

The Israel-Lebanon border has seen almost daily exchanges since the Israel-Hamas war began on October 7. Before Monday, the exchanges had killed around 600 people in Lebanon – mostly fighters but also about 100 civilians — and about 50 soldiers and civilians in Israel. It has also forced hundreds of thousands of people to evacuate homes near the border in both Israel and Lebanon.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah promised to retaliate for the electronic device bombings. But Hezbollah also has proved wary of further stoking the crisis. The group faces a difficult balance of stretching the rules of engagement by hitting deeper into Israel in response to its brazen attacks, while at the same time trying to avoid the kind of large-scale attacks on civilian areas that can trigger a full-scale war that it could be blamed for.

What is Israel planning?

Israeli officials say they haven't yet made an official decision to expand military operations against Hezbollah – and haven't said publicly what those operations might be. Last week, though, the head of Israel's Northern Command was quoted in local media as advocating for a ground invasion of Lebanon.

Meanwhile, as fighting in Gaza has slowed, Israel has increased its forces along the Lebanese border, including the arrival of a powerful army division believed to include thousands of troops.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant last week declared the start of a "new phase" of the war as Israel turns its focus toward Hezbollah.

A UN-brokered truce to the 2006 war called on Hezbollah to pull back 29 kilometers (18 miles) from the border, but it has refused, accusing Israel of also failing to carry out some provisions. Israel is now demanding Hezbollah withdraw eight to 10 kilometers (five to six miles) from the border – the range of Hezbollah's anti-tank guided missiles.

But Israel could have a more ambitious goal this time: to seize a buffer zone in south Lebanon to push back Hezbollah fighters from the border. A fight to hold territory threatens a longer, even more destructive and destabilising war – recalling Israel's 1982-2000 occupation of southern Lebanon.

What would be the impact of a full-blown war?

The fear is that a new war could be even worse than the one in 2006, which was traumatic enough for both sides to serve as a deterrent ever since.

The fighting then killed hundreds of Hezbollah fighters and an estimated 1,100 Lebanese civilians and left large swaths of the south and even parts of Beirut in ruins. More than 120 Israeli soldiers were killed and hundreds wounded. Hezbollah missile fire on Israeli cities killed dozens of civilians.

Israel estimates that Hezbollah now possesses about 150,000 rockets and missiles, some of which are precision-guided, putting the entire country within range. Israel has beefed up air defences, but it's unclear whether it can defend against the intense barrages of a new war.

Israel has vowed it could turn all of southern Lebanon into a battle zone, saying Hezbollah has embedded rockets, weapons and forces along the border. And in the heightened rhetoric of the past months, Israeli politicians have spoken of inflicting the same damage in Lebanon that the military has wreaked in Gaza. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

Can heat-tolerant corals protect Great Barrier Reef?

Just as individual humans handle stress differently, so do corals. Even coral colonies of the same species, growing side by side, vary in their tolerance to pressures such as heatwaves.

In research published today, we discovered surprising new evidence of variable heat tolerance in corals. As the world's oceans warm, these differences are important.

Earlier this year, the world's fourth global mass bleaching event was declared. The Great Barrier Reef has suffered five mass bleachings since 2016 – most recently this past summer. The declarations followed the world's warmest year.

To keep the world's coral reefs healthy and functioning, global carbon emissions must be dramatically curbed to reduce the rate of ocean warming. As humanity works towards that goal, interventions may buy time for corals to survive in their warming environments.

What we did

The heat tolerance of corals can be measured by analysing their responses to elevated water temperatures. Our research involved measuring the bleaching thresholds of more than 500 colonies of the tabular coral, Acropora hyacinthus.

The characteristic colour of coral is provided by algae living inside its tissue. The algae also provide most of the coral's nutrition. When water temperatures get too high for too long, the coral expels the algae, causing it to bleach and starve.

While at sea, we visited 17 reefs to scuba dive and search for Acropora hyacinthus. We then brought samples of these corals on board a research vessel to conduct experiments.

Our specially designed portable experiment system contained 12 tanks set to four different temperatures. Coral fragments were placed in each tank and subjected to short-term heat stress at different temperatures.

We then determined each coral's bleaching thresholds - in other words, the temperature at which the coral's pigmentation drops to 50 per cent of its healthy level.

This allowed us to understand how much variation exists and where the most heat-tolerant colonies live.

So what did we find?

Under our experiments, the amount of pigment retained under high temperatures varied from 3 per cent to 95 per cent. This means at high temperatures, some coral colonies completely bleached while others seemed barely affected.

Of the 17 reefs we studied, 12 contained colonies with bleaching thresholds in the top 25 per cent. This means heat-tolerant corals could be found at most of the reefs we sampled.

Nature versus nurture

Corals handle stress differently for two reasons: nature and nurture.

Each coral has a unique "nature" or genetic makeup that can affect its heat tolerance. Our results suggest corals found across the entire Great Barrier Reef may hold unique genetic resources that are important for recovery and adaptation.

We found corals living in warmer regions, such as the northern Great Barrier Reef, can handle higher water temperatures. However, because the water is so warm in these areas, the corals are already pushed close to their temperature limits.

Corals in the southern Great Barrier Reef cannot handle temperatures as high as their northern neighbours. Our findings suggest these corals can tolerate more warming above their local temperatures than corals to the north.

These tolerance patterns may affect which corals survive marine heatwaves.

Giving our reefs a future

Our findings have potentially important implications for the ability of corals to adapt to warmer seas under climate change.

The results may also inform reef restoration and conservation efforts. For example, heat-tolerant parent corals could be selectively bred to produce offspring better suited to warmer waters.

The success of such programmes depends on the extent to which a coral's genetic makeup controls its tolerance to heat. So, the next step in this research is investigating these genetic differences.

Selective breeding trials are already underway, using the most heat-tolerant corals identified in study.

When it comes to protecting our coral reefs, reducing greenhouse gas emissions is imperative. However, interventions such as selective breeding may be useful to give coral reefs the best future possible. . *—PTI*

To keep the world's coral reefs healthy and functioning, global carbon emissions must be dramatically curbed to reduce the rate of ocean warming
PHOTO: FREEPIK

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Leaders speak of emerging threats, hints of war in the UN meet

The security cordons are up. The streets are ready to be sealed off. Aircraft from myriad nations are landing in New York.

It all means one thing for the eastern part of Manhattan: The yearly gathering of world leaders at the United Nations is at hand.

The UN General Assembly's high-level leaders' meeting convenes Tuesday in a troubled world — arguably even more troubled than last year, when the chief of the United Nations warned that the problems were overwhelming. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will likely issue a similar warning on Tuesday as he opens the meeting, and world leaders take the stage amid war and rumours of war.

The day before the big meeting starts was full of hints as to the agenda in the days to come:

World leaders spoke at an event called "Summit of the Future", with many focusing on emerging threats, to the earth's climate, on the battlefield and in cyberspace.

Most of Earth's systems are out of whack when it comes to climate change, and nations vary on who should pay to help poor nations deal with the impacts and switch to cleaner energy.

Here's your daily guide to what's going on at the United Nations this week, day by day:

At the "Summit of the Future", Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi voiced concerns about "emerging theatres of conflict", including in cyberspace.

"There is a need for balanced regulation at a global level for the safe and responsible use of technology," Modi said, cautioning that "we need global digital governance which ensures that national sovereignty and integrity are upheld".

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi talked up key Beijing initiatives such as the Belt and Road program, which brings Chinese companies to build Chinese-funded transportation, energy, and infrastructure projects overseas. He also hit some oft-repeated Chinese complaints, such as criticising "bloc confrontation" and sanctions imposed by a single country.

Representing a country where the median age is 28, Ecuador's president urged the international community to have "a clear vision" for education and youth employment. Then suddenly, no one could hear him. The microphone of Daniel Noboa Azin was cut off.

Speech time limits often aren't enforced at top-level UN meetings, but at the Summit of the Future, the mic was shut off after five minutes.

UN General Assembly's high-level leaders' meeting convenes Tuesday in a troubled world
PHOTO: X/UNGA

Among the leaders who've run up against the limit: Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva, Kuwait's Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al Sabah and Irish President Michael Higgins.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken says upcoming leadership changes in Japan and the United States won't have any impact on their commitments to security in Northeast Asia.

A group of scientists produced the first of what they hope is an annual planetary health check. The prognosis is grim.

Earth is in the danger zone on six of the nine special systems that scientists looked into, with a seventh flirting with that risky area and maybe already breaching the boundary, according to the "planetary health check" by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Research and the group called Planetary Guardians.

The six areas definitely out of whack are the freshwater system, the climate, the phosphorous cycle, biodiversity, general land health and "novel" chemicals (such as microplastics). Ocean acidification is about to cross the danger line or may have done so already, the report said.

Leaders of countries around the world spoke at the UN's "Summit of the Future" one by one. Or, San Marino's case, two by two.

For centuries, the tiny European republic has had two heads of state at any given time. They're called capitani reggenti — in English, captains regent — and they're selected every six months by the nation's 60-person legislature.

The current captains regent, Alessandro Rossi and Milena Gasperoni, took turns delivering their country's speech. It touched on issues including refugees, food waste, violent extremism and the value of multilateralism — the type of broad-based international system that the UN represents.

Caribbean leaders want big polluters — especially fossil fuel companies — to pay more of the trillions of dollars the world needs to help poor nations deal with climate change's impacts and switch to cleaner energy.

In a brief video appearance, Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley, a leader in the call for global financial reform and seen as a possible future UN secretary-general, said poorer and middle income nations realise that private money is going to have to be part of a financial deal.

Bahamas Prime Minister Philip Davis said fossil fuel companies need to be held accountable, but it will probably have to be in courts through lawsuits.

On tap for Tuesday, among other remarks, is the last UN address from Joe Biden as president of the United States after five decades on various parts of the world stage. Conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon, Ukraine and Sudan are expected to take centre stage all week. Guterres opens debate Tuesday morning. *—PTI*

PHOTO: AP

China rolls out other moves to help economy

BEIJING, 24 SEPT

China rolled out a raft of measures Tuesday aimed at countering a prolonged downturn in its property market that is weighing on the world's second largest economy. The chief of China's central bank said it would cut the amount of reserves banks are required to keep. It also slashed interest rates on its loans to commercial banks, reduced required down payments for some property purchases and prom-ised other moves to revive the slowing economy. Disruptions and job losses during the Covid-19 pan-demic, coupled with falling prices for homes, have left many Chinese unwilling or unable to spend, de-spite government efforts to encourage purchases of homes, electric vehicles and other big-ticket items. *—AP*

Brazil's President Lula to talk climate at UN

RIO DE JANEIRO, 24 SEPT

When Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva opens the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, he is ex-pected to call on the world to do more to combat climate change. It remains to be seen whether he will address fires ravaging the rainforest back home and criticism of his administration's own environ-mental stewardship. Brazil's Amazon saw 38,000 blazes last month — the most for any August since 2010, according to data from the country's space institute. September is on track to repeat that ignoble feat. Smoke has been choking residents of many cities, including metropolis Sao Paulo that's thou-sands of miles away. Lula has cast these fires as the result of criminals and proposed harsher punish-ments for environmental offenders. *—AP*

Swiss police make arrests over death in 'suicide capsule'

GENEVA, 24 SEPT

Police in northern Switzerland said Tuesday that several people have been detained and a criminal case opened in connection with the suspected death of a person in a new "suicide capsule." The "Sarco" suicide capsule, which has never been used be-fore, is designed to allow a person inside to push a button that injects nitrogen gas into the sealed chamber. The person is then supposed to fall asleep and die by suffocation in a few minutes. Prosecutors in Schaffhausen canton were informed by a law firm that an assisted suicide involving use of the Sarco capsule had taken place Monday near a forest cabin in Merishau-sen, police said in a statement. *—PTI*

Singapore convicts Indian-origin ex-minister

SINGAPORE, 24 SEP

Singapore's High Court in a corruption case on Tuesday convicted Indian-origin former transport minis-ter S Iswaran of lesser amended charges. The prosecution sought a jail term of six to seven months for the 62-year-old former minister who pleaded guilty on the first day of trial after saying for months that he would contest the case to clear his name. Iswaran admitted to four charges under Section 165 of the Penal Code, which forbids all public servants from obtaining any valuable thing from someone in-volved with them in an official capacity, and one charge of obstruction of justice. Another 30 charges will be taken into consider-ation for sentencing, report-ed Channel News Asia. After the charges were read to him, Iswaran was asked how he pleaded. "Your Honour, I plead guilty," he said. *—PTI*

558 killed after Israeli strikes hammer Lebanon

This is the deadliest attack since Hezbollah and Israel clashed in 2006

Firefighters work to extinguish a fire after a rocket hit a local municipality storage in Kiryat Shmona, northern Israel on Tuesday PHOTO: PTI

MARJAYOUN, 24 SEPT

Israeli strikes on Lebanon Monday killed more than 490 people, including more than 90 women and children, Lebanese authorities said, in the deadliest barrage since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war. The Israeli military warned residents in southern and eastern Lebanon to evacuate ahead of its widening air campaign against Hezbollah.

Thousands of Lebanese fled the south, and the main highway out of the southern port city of Sidon was jammed with cars heading toward Beirut in the biggest exodus since 2006. Lebanon's health minis-try said the strikes killed 492 people, including 35 children and 58 women, and wounded 1,645 people — a staggering one-day toll for a country still reeling from a deadly attack on communication devices last week.

The death toll far surpassed that of Beirut's devastating port explosion in 2020, when hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate stored in a warehouse detonated, killing at least 218 people and wounding more than 6,000.

Hagari claimed Monday's widespread airstrikes had inflicted heavy damage on Hezbollah. But he would not give a timeline for the ongoing operation and said Israel was prepared to launch a ground invasion of Lebanon if needed. "We are not looking for wars. We are looking to take down the threats," he said. "We will do whatever is necessary to do to achieve this mission. We hope to do it as shortly as we can."

Hagari said Hezbollah has launched some 9,000 rockets and drones into Israel since last October, in-cluding 250 on Monday alone. The military spokesman said Israeli warplanes struck 1,300 Hezbollah targets Monday, destroying cruise missiles, long- and short-range rockets and attack drones. He said many were hidden in residential areas, showing photos of what he said were weapons hidden in private homes.

The IDF said Hezbollah fired at least 100 rockets by the noon of Tuesday. The UN human rights chief urges intervention to stave off any further escalation in hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, voic-ing alarm. "UN High Commissioner Volker Türk calls on all states and actors with influence in the region and be-yond to avert further escalation and do everything they can to ensure full respect for international law," a spokesperson for Turk says at a Geneva press briefing.

—PTI/ Times of Israel

World leaders meet under shadow of global divisions

UNITED NATIONS, 24 SEPT

World leaders will open their annual meeting at the UN General Assembly on Tuesday under the shad-ow of increasing global divisions, major wars in Gaza, Ukraine and, Sudan and the threat of an even larger conflict in the wider Middle East.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres previewed his opening "State of the World" speech to presidents, prime ministers, monarchs and ministers at Sunday's "Summit of the Future", saying "our world is head-ing off the rails — and we need tough decisions to get back on track".

One notable moment at Tuesday's opening assembly meeting: US President Joe Biden's likely final ma-jor appearance on the world stage, a platform he has tried upon for decades. US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told reporters last week that the US focus in the assembly will be on ending "the scourge of war", lamenting that roughly two billion people live in conflict-affected areas.

- But she also said: "The most vulnerable around the world are counting on us to make progress, to make change, to bring about a sense of hope for them"

Among other speakers on opening day are Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Turkiye's Presi-dent Recep Tayyip Erdogan, King Abdullah II of Jordan, and Iran's new President Masoud Pezeshkian.

International Rescue Committee President David Miliband recalled that at the San Francisco confer-ence in 1945 where the UN was established, then-US President Harry Truman pleaded with delegates to reject the premise that "might makes right" and reverse it to "right makes might", which was en-shrined in the UN Charter. *—AP*

Sweden blames Iran for threats after Quran burnings

COPENHAGEN, 24 SEPT

Swedish authorities accused Iran on Tuesday of being behind thousands of text messages that were sent to people in the Scandinavian country calling for revenge over the burnings of Quran, Islam's holy book in 2023.

Officials in Stockholm claimed that Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard carried out "a data breach" and managed to send "some 15,000 text messages in Swedish" over the string of public burnings of the Quran.

Senior prosecutor Mats Ljungqvist said that a preliminary investigation, carried out by Sweden's SAPO domestic security agency, showed that "it was the Iranian state via the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, IRGC, that carried out a data breach at a Swedish company that runs a major SMS service."

The Swedish company was not named. There was no immediate comment from Iranian authorities on the accusations from Sweden.

In August 2023, Swedish media reported that a large number of people in Sweden had received text messages in Swedish calling for revenge against people who were burning the Quran, Ljungqvist said, adding that the sender of the messages was "a group calling itself the Anzu team."

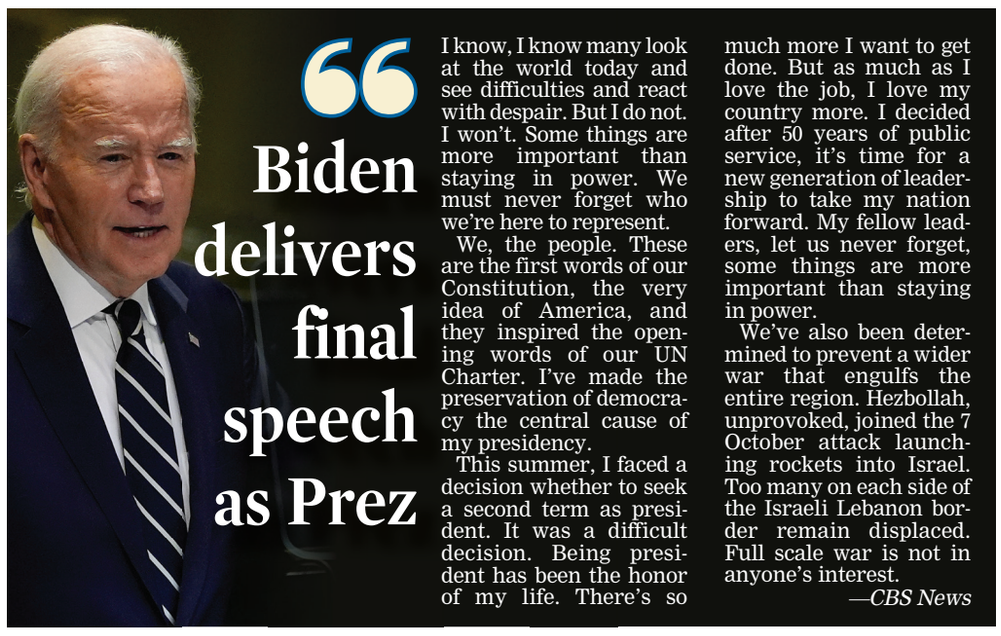
Senior prosecutor Mats Ljungqvist said that a preliminary investigation, carried out by Sweden's SAPO domestic agency PHOTO:X/@TTNews

Swedish broadcaster SVT published a photo of a text message, saying that "those who desecrated the Quran must have their work covered in ashes" and calling Swedes "demons."

The protests were held under the freedom of speech act, which is protected under the Swedish consti-tution. The rallies were approved by police.

SAPO's operational manager Fredrik Hallström said the text messages ' intent was to also "paint the image of Sweden as an Islamophobic country and create division in society." He accused "foreign powers" of seeking to "exploit vulnerabilities".

Sweden's domestic security agency in May accused Iran of using established criminal networks in Swe-den as a proxy to target Israeli or Jewish interests in the Scandinavian country. *—AP*



> "Biden delivers final speech as Prez

I know, I know many look at the world today and see difficulties and react with despair. But I do not. I won't. Some things are more important than staying in power. We must never forget who we're here to represent.

We, the people. These are the first words of our Constitution, the very idea of America, and they inspired the open-ing words of our UN Charter. I've made the preservation of democracy the central cause of my presidency.

This summer, I faced a decision whether to seek a second term as president. It was a difficult decision. Being president has been the honor of my life. There's so much more I want to get done. But as much as I love the job, I love my country more. I decided after 50 years of public service, it's time for a new generation of leadership to take my nation forward. My fellow leaders, let us never forget, some things are more important than staying in power.

We've also been determined to prevent a wider war that engulfs the entire region. Hezbollah, unprovoked, joined the 7 October attack launching rockets into Israel. Too many on each side of the Israeli Lebanon border remain displaced. Full scale war is not in anyone's interest.

—CBS News

Harini is SL's 3rd woman PM

COLOMBO, 24 SEPT

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake appointed Harini Amarasuriya as Sri Lanka's 16th Prime Minister, NewsWire reported.

Amarasuriya of the National People's Power (NPP) party is an academic, rights activist, and university lecturer and is known for her work in education and social justice. Her appointment marks a significant milestone in Sri Lankan politics.

She becomes Sri Lanka's third woman Prime Minister after Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, according to a NewsWire report.

Harini Amarasuriya PHOTO: X

The new Sri Lankan PM is the first academic-turned-politician to assume office. Harini Amarasuriya en-tered Parliament through the NPP national list in 2020.

On Monday, Marxist-leaning politician Anura Kumara Dissanayake took the oath as Sri Lanka's new president at the Presidential Secretariat building in Colombo after winning the elections held on 21 September. After taking the oath as Sri Lanka's President, he said, "I will do my best to fully restore the people's confidence in politicians," Al Jazeera reported. He said he understood the complexity of the problems faced by Sri Lanka. Dissanayake stated that he would work hard to realise the hopes of the people and win the confidence of all the people of Sri Lanka.

—ANI

Ukrainian soldiers want firepower to win, says Zelenskyy in US

Zelensky is set to present what he describes as Ukraine's "victory plan" to his American counterpart PHOTO: X/@ZELENSKYYUA

KYIV, 24 SEPT

As President Volodymyr Zelensky kicked off a visit to the US this week in a bid to secure more firepower for his army, Ukrainian soldiers on the ground monitored the news with half-hearted hope, questioning whether Kyiv's top Western ally would provide enough to help them defeat Russia.

In a historic trip more than two years into Russia's full-scale invasion, Zelensky is set to present what he describes as Ukraine's "victory plan" to his American counterpart, Joe Biden. He hopes that if backed by the outgoing US President, it will include the weaponry needed and the lifting of restrictions on deep strikes into Russia using Western missiles.

The Ukrainian leader began the US visit in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Biden's home-town, at an ammuni-tion factory arming Ukraine's artillery units with shells. Zelensky is due to travel on to the UN General Assembly in New York and later Washington, DC. Thousands of kilometers away on the hottest spots of the front line in Russia's war against Ukraine, multiple soldiers told the Kyiv Independent that they don't anticipate notable progress from Zelensky's efforts to win over Biden but agreed on the importance of pressing Western allies for permission to use their long-range weapons on Russian territory.

—Kyiv Independent

Russian attacks against Ukraine kill 4, injure 39

KYIV, 24 SEPT

Russian attacks against Ukraine killed four people and injured 39 over the past day, regional authorities said on 24 September.

Ukrainian forces downed 66 out of 81 Shahed-type drones launched by Russia overnight, the Air Force reported. Thirteen more drones were "lost" in a few regions, according to the statement. Russian forc-es also launched an Iskander-M ballistic missile, two Kh-59/69 cruise missiles and one missile of a type yet to be determined.

The Russian attack on the city of Zaporizhzhia killed one person and injured at least seven oth-ers, including a 15-year-old boy and a 13-year-old girl. The strike targeted a critical infrastructure facility and a residential neighborhood. At least 70 apartment buildings were damaged, Fedorov said.

—Kyiv Independent

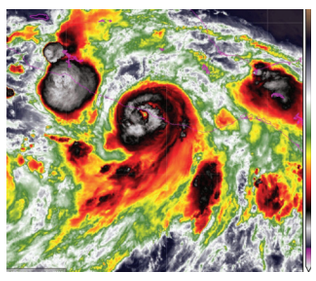
CATEGORY 3 STORM

Hurricane John makes landfall in Mexico

PUERTO ESCONDIDO, 24 SEPT

Hurricane John ripped toward Mexico's southern coast on Monday after rapidly intensifying over the eastern Pacific Ocean, surprising authorities who called for residents of some coastal areas to head for cover.

The US National Hurricane Centre said John had "rapidly strengthened" into a Category 3 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 120 mph (190 kph). The storm was extremely close to the coast — about 15 miles (20 kilometers) south of Punta Maldonado and it was moving north at 8 mph (13 kph). John was set to touch land late Monday night, according to forecasters and Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.



Satellite image of Hurricane John PHOTO: xxx

"Seek higher ground, protect yourselves and do not forget that life is the most important thing; mate-rial things can be replaced. We are here," wrote Lopez Obrador on a post on the social media platform X. Forecasters projected John would hit the beachside town of Punta Maldonado head on, and also likely batter nearby tourist hubs Acapulco and Puerto Escondido before turning into a tropical storm while makes it way inland.

Shortly before the hurricane hit, the centre said "life-threatening" and storm surges and flash floods were already ravaging the Pacific coast near Oaxaca. "These are storms that we haven't really experienced before," he said. "Rapid intensification has oc-curred more frequently in modern times as opposed to back in the historical record. So that's telling us there's something going on there." Things were tense in Oaxaca's coastal cities on Monday shortly after the announcement as residents and businesses were bracing themselves. Authorities appeared to be responding quickly to the shift in forecast. *—AP*

Tsunami advisory issued for Japan island

TOKYO, 24 SEPT

Small tsunami waves splashed ashore on remote Japanese islands on Tuesday morning after an earth-quake that may have been triggered by volcanic activity.

The offshore quake was not felt, and the tsunami advisory was lifted about three hours later. *—AP*

Bangladesh on high alert ahead of Durga Puja

DHAKA, 24 SEPT

Ahead of the upcoming Durga Puja festival, Bangladesh authorities have assured of increased security measures that have been put in place amid concerns of violence tar-geting minority Hindu communities.

Durga Puja is set to be celebrated from October 9 to 13. The celebrations will be held in 32,666 pavilions of Bangladesh, po-lice said. The police will exercise utmost vigilance in the security of the puja mandaps, said Md. Moinul Islam, Inspector General of Police, Bangladesh who presided over a law and order and security meeting for Durga Puja at the Hall of Pride of the Police headquarters on Monday. The IGP said that the police have ensured three-level security measures to be put in place on the occasion of Durga Puja, pre-Durga Puja and during idol immersion post Durga Puja.

PHOTO: ANI

Cyber Monitoring of the police has been strength-ened to prevent spread of rumours on social media, the IGP said.

He requested the Hindu leaders to contact the National Emergency Service 999 or the nearest police station in case of emer-gency. He said that the criminals usually attempt to create untoward incidents in the puja mandap at midnight or on the last night of the nine night festival. *—ANI*

Gold remains flat at ₹76,950 per 10 gram

MUMBAI, 24 SEPT

Gold prices remained flat at Rs 76,950 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid a firm trend in the overseas markets. On Monday, the precious metal had revisited the all-time high level of Rs 76,950 after a gap of six months, according to market sources. The metal previously hit the record level of Rs 76,950 on March 22 this year, they said. Silver also firmed up at Rs 90,000 per kilogram on fresh demand from industrial users. Additionally, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also ruled flat at Rs 76,600 per 10 grams. Meanwhile, the spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets were trading at an all-time high of Rs 76,150 per 10 grams. Silver contracts for December delivery also climbed Rs 469 or 0.53 per cent to Rs 89,700 per kg on the bourse. Gold hit a fresh high in the spot market amid positive sentiments in China. —*PTI*

Rupee falls 11 paise to close at 83.65 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 24 SEPT

The rupee depreciated 11 paise to close at 83.65 (provisional) against the American currency, weighed down by a muted trend in domestic equities and rising crude oil prices. The Indian rupee opened higher on Tuesday as domestic equities touched fresh record highs. However, the rupee lost early gains and closed in the red and domestic equity markets also followed suit and closed in the negative territory. Forex traders said a surge in crude oil prices weighed on the rupee, while the US Dollar weakened as China announced fresh stimulus to boost its economy. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.54 against the American currency and finally settled at 83.65 (provisional) against the US dollar, down 11 paise from its previous close. —*PTI*

Delaware SC ruling affirms BYJU's default on $1.2B loan

'Byju devised an alternate story to prove it did not default'

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The Delaware Supreme Court ruling has affirmed that edtech firm BYJU's has defaulted on Term Loan B.

BYJU's US-based lenders on Tuesday said the Delaware Supreme Court affirmed the previous ruling by Delaware Court of Chancery's and said an event of default had occurred under the credit agreement and entitled BYJU's lenders and their administrative agent, GLAS Trust for action against the company.

BYJU's, from US-based lenders, had raised USD 1.2 billion Term Loan B (TLB) -- a loan which is issued by institutional investors, through its holding company Byju's Alpha.

The lenders through their administrative agent GLAS Trust approached Delaware Court of Chancery alleged default in the payments under the loan agreement and sought early payment of the USD 1.2 billion TLB.

Think and Learn, which owns BYJU's brand, had contested the claim but the Delaware Court of Chancery ruled in favour of the lenders.

A query sent to BYJU's did not elicit any immediate reply *PHOTO: PTI*

> BYJU's, from US-based lenders, had raised USD 1.2 billion Term Loan B (TLB) -- a loan which is issued by institutional investors, through its holding company Byju's Alpha

According to a statement of The steering committee of the ad hoc group of term loan lenders, BYJU'S founder and CEO Byju Raveendran and his brother Riju Ravindran have voluntarily conceded that BYJU's was in default of credit agreement by October 2022.

A query sent to BYJU's did not elicit any immediate reply.

The US-based lenders through GLAS Trust had filed claims of USD 1.35 billion dues in Indian courts during ongoing insolvency proceedings against the edtech firm. In the latest statement, the lenders have raised their total claim to USD 1.5 billion.

The committee said that the Delaware Supreme Court ruling has validated that the Lenders were well within their contractual rights to accelerate the Term Loan and take control of BYJU's Alpha Inc. The committee said that Byju has attempted to concoct an alternate narrative that BYJU's did not default and to place the blame of the company's failure on others rather than repay lenders money including disclosing what happened to the USD 533 million of missing loan proceeds.

The committee said that the Delaware SC determined that the series of amendments to the credit agreement entered into between October 2022 and January 2023 make clear that BYJU's voluntarily conceded both that events of default occurred and the consequences thereof, namely, GLAS' legal entitlement to exercise remedies. —*PTI*

HIT 85K IN EARLY TRADE

Sensex, Nifty lose steam after hitting landmark record

MUMBAI, 24 SEPT

Benchmark equity indices ended almost flat in a highly volatile trade on Tuesday after the Sensex breached the 85,000 mark for the first time and the Nifty hit the 26,000 level in intra-day due to selling in Hindustan Unilever, Kotak Mahindra Bank and ICICI Bank.

Investors are struggling to find clear directions following a record rally, traders said.

In the morning trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex scaled the 85,000 level for the first time, while the NSE Nifty hit the historic 26,000 mark during the fag-end.

After oscillating between highs and lows, the 30-share BSE benchmark dipped 14.57 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 84,914.04. During the day, it jumped 234.62 points or 0.27 per cent to scale a fresh all-time intra-day peak of 85,163.23.

The Nifty eked out a marginal gain of 1.35 points or 0.01 per cent to 25,940.40. During the day, it climbed 72.5 points or 0.27 per cent to hit a new record intra-day high of 26,011.55.

From the 30 Sensex firms, Hindustan Unilever, UltraTech Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank, IndusInd Bank, Titan, Nestle, Bajaj Finance and Asian Paints were among the biggest laggards.

Tata Steel, Power Grid, Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech, Mahindra & Mahindra and JSW Steel were among the gainers.

S&P Global Ratings on Tuesday retained India's growth forecast at 6.8 per cent for the current fiscal and said it expects the RBI to start cutting interest rates in its October monetary policy review.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 2.35 per cent to USD 75.64 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 404.42 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. —*PTI*

SpiceJet resolves $16.7M dispute with Engine Lease

MUMBAI, 24 SEPT

Domestic carrier SpiceJet on Tuesday said it has successfully resolved its dispute with Engine Lease Finance Corporation (ELFC) through an amicable settlement.

ELFC, which had previously claimed USD 16.7 million, has agreed to settle for an undisclosed amount, which is lower than the initial claim, the Gurugram-based airline said in a statement.

The airline, however, did not disclose the final amount that ELFC has settled for under the pact.

The representatives of both parties will now formalise the settlement agreement, with a view to withdrawing all ongoing litigation and ending disputes between them, SpiceJet said.

PHOTO: PTI

"We have reached a mutually beneficial settlement with ELFC, which enables us to move forward with a clean slate.

This agreement not only resolves past issues but also strengthens our position as we embark on the next phase of growth and expansion," said Ajay Singh, Chairman and Managing Director of SpiceJet.

On Monday, SpiceJet said it has raised Rs 3,000 crore Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP). —*PTI*

AFTER CHINA'S STIMULUS

Metal stocks in heavy demand; Tata Steel jumps over 4%

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Metal stocks were in the limelight on Tuesday after China announced a series of policy measures to support its economy and property market.

Shares of National Aluminium Company jumped 6.16 per cent, Tata Steel surged 4.29 per cent, Hindalco Industries soared 3.98 per cent, NMDC (3.90 per cent) and Vedanta (3.80 per cent) on the BSE.

The stock of SAIL climbed 3.20 per cent, Jindal Stainless (2 per cent), Jindal Steel (1.91 per cent) and JSW Steel (0.61 per cent).

China announced rate cuts and a raft of stimulus measures to help its economy and property market.

PHOTO: PTI

"The Chinese central bank's rate cut and additional stimulus measures have positively influenced global investor sentiment, resulting in gains for domestic metal stocks," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

"Metal stocks were in focus after China's central bank announced a series of policy measures to support the economy and the struggling property market," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management at Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities, said, "Nifty Metal rose to hit a nearly two-month high on Tuesday, as risk appetite for metal stocks improved after China's central bank announced a slew of measures to boost the world's second-largest economy." —*PTI*

Goyal promises to take up issues of realtors with RBI

SYDNEY, 24 SEPT

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday assured realtors that he would take up the issue of easy financing to the real estate sector like other industries with the Reserve Bank of India.

The minister also assured that he would talk to state governments and urban local bodies for faster approvals for real estate projects, provided the builders pledge to do business in a transparent manner with zero corruption.

Addressing a conference organised by reactors' apex body CREDAI, Goyal highlighted that the new realty law RERA has brought transparency and certainty in the real estate sector.

Ever since RERA was introduced, he said, "you will appreciate that a lot of the disciplines that were brought in were good for honest and sincere developers..." —*PTI*

Adani Green, Adani Energy Solutions join UNEZA

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Adani Green Energy and Adani Energy Solutions have joined the Utilities for Net Zero Alliance, a joint statement said on Tuesday. Utilities for Net Zero Alliance (UNEZA) was established at COP28 with the adoption of the UAE Declaration of Action. The alliance unites leading global utilities and power companies to spearhead the development of grids that are ready for renewable energy, promoting clean energy solutions and advancing electrification efforts. Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) and Adani Energy Solutions Ltd (AESL) have become the first in their respective segments in India to join this global alliance, the statement said. As a member of UNEZA, AGEL will focus on areas like the build-out of clean power, enhancement of energy security and improvement of energy efficiency, whereas AESL will redouble its efforts towards developing a reliable grid infrastructure for green energy transmission. —*PTI*

'India needs to hike climate funding to scale up solar'

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

India will need increased climate finance to scale up wind and solar capacities to over 600 gigawatt, a study said on Tuesday. Enhanced international cooperation, including the provision of grants and concessional finance help to mobilise private capital, is urgently needed to ensure emerging and developing countries benefit equally from the renewables rollout, the report by Climate Analytics and NewClimate Institute said. For India, the study said, "The country has made impressive progress on wind and solar but would need more international climate finance to scale them five-fold to over 600 GW. —*PTI*

OYO's EBITDA to cross ₹2K cr with Motel 6

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The EBITDA of IPO-bound travel tech platform OYO is expected to cross Rs 2,000 crore in 2025-26 with the American budget hotel chain Motel 6 adding substantially to its topline, according to documents.

The travel tech unicorn estimates that Motel 6 will add over Rs 630 crore to its EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortisation) in the coming financial year, which will be the first full year of its integration.

The travel tech major is expected to refile its initial public offering (IPO) papers with markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) after refinancing its existing USD 450 million Term Loan B (TLB) at a lower interest rate. OYO on Saturday announced it has agreed to acquire Motel 6 and Studio 6 brands from Blackstone Real Estate for USD 525 million in an all-cash transaction. Oravel Stays, the parent company of OYO stated that it will acquire G6 Hospitality, the leading economy lodging franchisor and parent company of Motel 6 and the chain's offshoot hotel brand, Studio 6.

According to sources, OYO is planning to deploy a mix of debt and equity to finance the acquisition. It will utilise USD 250 mn from the recently concluded fund raise and existing cash balance.Before the acquisition, OYO had projected its PAT to surge over 3-fold to Rs 700 crore in the current fiscal vs FY24. OYO its first-ever profit after tax of Rs 229 crore. —*PTI*

'Slower deposit pushes banks to raise bonds'

MUMBAI, 24 SEPT

The slower deposit growth will push banks to mop-up up to Rs 1.3 lakh crore from bond issuances in FY25, a report said on Tuesday.

The bond issuances, coming amidst a continuing wedge between deposit and credit growth, will come between Rs 1.2-1.3 lakh crore and will be the highest ever for the system, the report said.

Nearly 85 per cent of the bond issuances will be by public sector banks, the report by domestic rating agency Icra said, adding that the higher appetite for infra bonds among such lenders will drive the market.

PHOTO: ANI

Banks had raised Rs 1 lakh crore from the bond issuances avenue in FY24, while the previous all-time high was reached in FY23 at Rs 1.1 lakh crore.

With the mid-fiscal year mark approaching, the report said banks have already raised Rs 76,700 crore from bonds till now, which is an over 225 per cent growth over the resources mobilised during the same period in FY24. —*PTI*

S&P expects inflation to average 4.5 per cent in the current fiscal *PHOTO: PTI*

S&P retains India's growth at 6.8%, expects rate cut

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

S&P Global Ratings on Tuesday retained India's growth forecast at 6.8 per cent for the current fiscal and said it expects the RBI to start cutting interest rates in its October monetary policy review.

In the economic outlook of Asia Pacific, S&P Global Ratings also retained its GDP growth forecast for the 2025-26 fiscal at 6.9 per cent and said solid growth in India will allow the Reserve Bank to focus on bringing inflation in line with its target.

S&P said the Union Budget in July outlined that the government remains committed to fiscal consolidation and to keeping the focus of public expenditure on infrastructure. The Budget has earmarked a capital expenditure of Rs 11.11 lakh crore in the current fiscal ending March 2025.

S&P said the RBI (Reserve Bank of India) considers food inflation a hurdle for rate cuts. It reckons that unless there is a lasting and meaningful decline in the rate at which food prices are increasing it will be tough to maintain headline inflation at 4 per cent.

S&P expects inflation to average 4.5 per cent in the current fiscal.

After the US Federal Reserve cut its benchmark interest rate by 50 basis points, there have been expectations that the RBI may also go in for a 25 basis points cut in the policy review next month. —*PTI*

Working-age population to rise 64%: SBI research

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The working-age population in India has witnessed an increasing trend since 1971 and is projected to reach 64.4 per cent in the soon-to-be exercised Census, as per a report by SBI Research.

It will further increase to 65.2 per cent in 2031, the report asserted on Tuesday.

The working age population, people in the age bracket of 15-59, rose from 55.4 per cent in 1991, to 56.9 per cent in 2001, 60.7 per cent in 2021.

The average annual growth is on a downward trajectory and is expected to decline from 2.20 per cent in 1971 to 1.00 per cent in 2024, putting the national population somewhere in the range of 138-142 crore in 2024, the SBI research said.

As per population census data, the share of children in the age group 0 -14 years increased till 1971 and gradually declined thereafter. —*PTI*

FAKE GST REGISTRATION

Bogus firms with 10K cr evasion detected

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Tax officers have detected around 10,700 fake registrations under the GST, involving evasion of Rs 10,179 crore in the ongoing all-India drive against fake companies set up to defraud the exchequer, a senior official said on Tuesday.

Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) member Shashank Priya said Aadhaar authentication of GST registration is already in place in 12 states and by October 4, another four states would join.

Eventually, 20 states, including Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, will start Aadhaar authentication.

An amount of Rs 24,010 crore of suspected tax evasion was detected during the first special drive *PHOTO: PTI*

Speaking at an Assocham event, Shashank Priya also said that in future, the tax authorities may also put certain restrictions on new taxpayers based on their risk profile.

CBIC official also said that the government is taking targeted action to check fake GST registration and more physical verification is taking place.

The second all-India drive against fake registration began on 16 August and will continue till 15 October.

In the first drive against fake registration between May 16, 2023 and July 15, 2023, a total of 21,791 entities having GST registration were discovered to be non-existent.

An amount of Rs 24,010 crore of suspected tax evasion was detected during the first special drive last year.

Separately, GSTN would start the IMS from 1 October, which will facilitate taxpayers in matching their records/ invoices vis-a-vis issued by their suppliers for availing the correct Input Tax Credit (ITC). IMS would enable taxpayers to efficiently address invoice corrections/ amendments with their suppliers through the portal. —*PTI*

India's bank bond may hit ₹1.2-1.3 trillion: ICRA

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Banks in India are poised for a significant surge in bond issuances in FY2025, with estimates reaching Rs 1.2-1.3 trillion, surpassing the previous peak of Rs 1.1 trillion in FY2023, according to a recent report by ICRA.

The report highlights that this surge is being driven primarily by public sector banks (PSBs), which are expected to command an 82-85 per cent share of the total bond issuances, particularly through infrastructure bonds.

The increase in bond issuances comes as banks look to alternative funding sources amid deposit growth lagging behind credit expansion.

Tight liquidity conditions and strong credit growth, outpacing deposit accumulation, have prompted banks to turn to bond markets to meet their funding requirements. As of FY2025 year-to-date (YTD), banks have issued Rs. 767 billion in bonds, reflecting a 225 per cent year-on-year increase and already accounting for 75 per cent of the total bond issuances in FY2024.

The dominance of PSBs in bond issuance is largely attributed to their substantial infrastructure loan portfolios and the ongoing push from the Government of India for infrastructure development. —*PTI*

Pant has been a big influence, says Cummins

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

R Australian captain Pat Cummins acknowledged that Rishabh Pant has been a "major influence" in India's back-to-back Test series wins Down Under, stressing the need to keep the flamboyant wicketkeeper-batter "quiet" in the upcoming five-Test series later this year. A key figure in India's historic Test triumphs in 2018-19 and 2020-21, the 26-year-old Pant made a stunning comeback from a horrific car accident in December 2022, scoring a second innings century in the first Test against Bangladesh last week. In 12 innings, he has amassed 624 runs at an impressive average of 62.40, with a top score of 159 not out. *—PTI*

Rodri suffers knee-injury, spotted in Spain

MANCHESTER, 24 SEPT

Manchester City midfielder Rodri has been pictured arriving in Spain reportedly ahead of tests on a right knee injury sustained against Arsenal in the English Premier League at the weekend. City hasn't publicly commented on the nature of the problem, amid reports in the British media that the Spain international has suffered an ACL injury and is set for a long-term absence from the team. Sections of the Spanish media published footage on social media of Rodri arriving in Barcelona on Monday. If Rodri is missing for a long period of time, it seriously damages City's chances of winning the Premier League for a record-extending fifth straight season. City leads the league by a point after five games. Rodri, who is among the favorites to win the Ballon d'Or for 2024, is arguably City's most important player because of how he protects the defense and conducts the team's passing game. *—AP*

Sarfaraz, Dayal and Jurel to be released for Irani Cup

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Premier middle-order batter Sarfaraz Khan, wicket-keeper Dhruv Jurel and pacer Yash Dayal are set to be released from the Indian team for the Irani Cup in case they are not selected in the playing XI for the second Test against Bangladesh, starting September 27 in Kanpur. The BCCI on Tuesday announced the Rest of India squad, led by Ruturaj Gaikwad, which will take on reigning Ranji Trophy champions Mumbai in Lucknow from October 1-5. "Dhruv Jurel and Yash Dayal have been selected in the Rest of India squad and their participation is subject to them not being involved in the second Test match against Bangladesh in Kanpur," said the BCCI statement on Tuesday. If sources are to be believed, in case Rishabh Pant suffers any niggle during the Test, KL Rahul can fill up for him. As reported by PTI on Monday, prolific run-getter Sarfaraz, who represents Mumbai domestically, too will play for his home side, led by Ajinkya Rahane, if he does not figure in the playing XI for the second Test. *—PTI*

Haroon is now USA's Cricket League Director

WASHINGTON, 24 SEPT

America's National Cricket League has appointed former International Cricket Council CEO Haroon Lorgat as its commissioner, aiming to popularise the sport in the United States. A former first-class cricketer, Lorgat served as the ICC CEO from 2008 to 2012, overseeing three World Cups and playing a key role in developments such as the Decision Review System (DRS), the expansion of anti-corruption measures, and the growth of cricket in associate countries. "I'm privileged to take on this role with the National Cricket League at such a transformative moment. Cricket is a sport with the power to inspire new players and connect fans across the US," Lorgat said in a statement. *—PTI*

Gukesh, Pragg, Vaishali accorded grand welcome

India is a new chess powerhouse after teams' maiden gold

CHENNAI, 24 SEPT

Praggnanandhaa, Vaishali Rameshbabu and men's team Captain Srinath Narayanan receive a warm welcome on their return to the country at the Chennai airport on Tuesday *PHOTO: ANI*

Flashing radiant smiles after their history-making gold at the Olympiad, members of India's trailblasing chess teams returned to an enthusiastic welcome from fans, officials and their families here on Tuesday.

The quartet of D Gukesh, R Praggnanandhaa, R Vaishali, and men's team captain Srinath Narayanan landed here early this morning.

Both the Indian men's and women's teams scripted history on Sunday, winning their maiden gold medals in the Chess Olympiad in Hungary. Their extraordinary victory reinforced India's position as a new chess powerhouse. And as was expected, there were loud cheers as the four walked out of the airport.

Gukesh, who was instrumental in Indian men's team dominance in the tournament with an unbeaten run, flashed his individual and team gold medals for the cameras. The 18-year-old is now gearing up for the world championship clash against China's Ding Liren in November after becoming the youngest ever challenger to the crown by winning the Candidates Tournament in April. "It's very special, since both the teams won the gold," Gukesh told PTI Videos.

The brother-sister duo of Praggnanandhaa and Vaishali Narayanan reached in the before Gukesh. All of them were welcomed with garlands, bouquets and traditional stoles as fans scampered to click selfies with them. "I'm very happy that we have won the Olympiad for the first time, we have only won a bronze till now. And we managed to win in both sections so it's a very special feeling and a proud moment for us," Praggnanandhaa said.

"We were playing good chess and it showed that we were the best team. The Olympiad is the only tournament we play as a team for the country," he added. Vaishali, who laid the foundation for the women's team's triumph, said missing out on the gold in the last edition in Chennai was painful.

"We won six matches in a row and then lost to Poland, painful defeat but Im happy that we came back. We drew against US next and last two matches we had to win to secure gold. Very happy that we delivered in the crucial moment," she added.

For men's captain Narayanan the gold is a culmination of years of hard work. "...it feels great that I was the captain of one of the strongest teams that won the Olympiad in such a dominant fashion. When something spectacular like this happens it's usually a result of years of effort and that's what happened here as well," he said. *—PTI*

CHERIAN TO LEAD

Thomas K Cherian will lead India in its bid to qualify for the AFC U-20 Asian Cup qualifiers *PHOTO: AIFF*

Cherian to lead India to qualify for U20 Asian Cup

VIENTIANE, 24 SEPT

Defender Thomas Cherian will lead India in their bid to qualify for the AFC U-20 Asian Cup for the first time, as they face Mongolia in their Group G opener here on Wednesday.

India reached Vientiane on Monday evening, and after a night's rest, coach Ranjan Chaudhuri convened the squad to announce Cherian as the captain.

The top teams from each group, along with the five best second-placed teams from 10 groups will qualify for the tournament proper.

"We have a great responsibility from our nation, and we've prepared well for it. The mindset of the boys is extremely good, and we just have to do our job with a positive mindset," said the young Indian defender.

Coach Chaudhuri said they have been preparing for three months and it's time for the real action and start well.

"The first match of any tournament is crucial, and we must ensure that we get three points from it. That would set the tone for us," said Chaudhuri. "Mongolia are a very good side, and we have to be at our best, but we will try to maintain our focus and remain positive."

For Mongolia, who arrived in Laos a couple of days before India, it is a matter of acclimatising in time to play on natural turf.

Mongolia head coach Anar Batchuluun said, "We thought the weather conditions would be the biggest factor for us, but we have been pleasantly surprised by it. The only thing we have to adjust to is the natural turf on which we will play, as all the turfs back home are artificial.

India's next challengers will be Iran (27 September), and hosts Laos (29 September) at the Lao National Stadium KM16.

Kick-off: 2.30 pm. *—PTI*

BAI announces Rs 50 lakh cash reward for medallist para-shuttlers *PHOTO: BAI*

BAI announces ₹50L for Paralympic winners

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The Badminton Association of India announced on Tuesday a total reward of Rs 50 lakh for the para shuttlers who secured medals at the Paris Paralympics last month.

Indian para shuttlers won five medals, including one gold, two silver and as many bronze, at the Paris Games.

Nitesh Kumar, who clinched the coveted gold in the men's Singles SL3 category, will receive a prize of Rs 15 lakh, while silver medallists Suhas Yathiraj (men's singles SL4) and Thulasimathi Murugesan (women's singles SU5) will each be awarded Rs 10 lakh.

Bronze-medal winners Manisha Ramadass (women's singles SU5) and Nithya Sre Sivan (women's single SH6 category) will each receive Rs 7.5 lakh.

Thulasimathi, Manisha and Nithya made history by becoming the first Indian women shuttlers to secure medals at the Paralympics.

"Indian para badminton players have been performing consistently on the world stage and the cash rewards are just one way for BAI to recognise their efforts in helping the country win medals at the Paralympics," BAI secretary-general Sanjay Mishra said.

Considering the tight tournament schedule of the players, BAI will also organise a virtual interaction session with these players to congratulate them and to understand their requirements for continued development. *—PTI*

HOCKEY: INDIA TO HOST GERMANY NEXT MONTH

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The Indian men's hockey team will take on Germany in a two-match bilateral contest at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium here on 23 and 24 October, Hockey India announced on Tuesday.

The last time India faced Germany was in the semi-final of the Paris Olympics, where the European giants emerged victorious by 3-2 margin. India won the bronze medal at this year's Olympics.

Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey said : "This bilateral series against Germany will be a remarkable showcase of world-class hockey. Both India and Germany have a rich history in the sport, and this series will give fans an opportunity to witness an intense competition between two of the most formidable teams in the world. "The India-Germany hockey rivalry has always been a thrilling contest. Our players are eager to compete against such a good side, and I believe this series will offer both teams a chance to fine-tune their skills and strategies ahead of future international tournaments. *—PTI*

WOMEN'S T20 WC

Harmanpreet happy to 'tick all boxes' on preparation front

MUMBAI, 24 SEPT

India Women's cricket team head coach Amol Muzumdar with captain Harmanpreet Kaur addresses press conference on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

The feeling of near misses has haunted Harmanpreet Kaur for long but the Indian captain feels that her team has ticked all the boxes in its bid to cross the line in the Women's T20 World Cup beginning in the UAE from 3 October.

"I know I have played so many World Cups but I have the same excitement as I had when I was 19," the 35-year-old skipper said. The main challenge will come from England and Australia, who have found a way to beat India in ICC events even from difficult situations. Since the tournament's inception in 2009, India have managed to reach the final only once -- in 2020 when they lost to nemesis Australia. India have also played WODI World Cup final in 2017. Harmanpreet has been a part of both teams and led in the 2020 T20 World Cup. "This is the best team we are going forward with. The players have been playing together for a long time. For us we came so close last time and lost in semis (2023).

"We have ticked all the boxes in terms of preparation compared to the small things were not there maybe in earlier editions," said Harmanpreet. India have not had game time since end of July when they surprisingly finished runners-up to Sri Lanka in the Asia Cup.

They had an extensive preparatory camp at the NCA where the players spent a lot of time on fitness and fielding, areas where the team has been found wanting in the past. The conference was also attended by head coach Muzumdar and chief selector Neetu David also made a rare appearance.

"During the Asia Cup, we played good cricket, one odd day things did not go to plan," said Harmanpreet, who has been part of all the T20 World Cup that have been staged till date. She has played so many global events in a career spanning close to decade and half but feels that she is as excited as her maiden World championship. *—PTI*

Vishnu, Prajwal, Rashmikaa to feature in NTC

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Vishnu Vardhan, Rashmikaa S Bhamidipaty and Prajwal Dev *PHOTO: PTI*

Multiple Asian Games medallist Vishnu Vardhan, top seed Prajwal Dev and defending champion Rashmikaa S Bhamidipaty will headline the 29th Fenesta Open National Tennis Championship (NTC) at the DLTA Complex here from 28 September -12 October.

The other top names include former India No. 2 Riya Bhatia.

Apart from the senior category, the tournament will have age-group sections in U-18, U-16 and U-14 for boys and girls.

The opening week of the tournament will feature men, women, U-18 boys and U-18 girls singles and doubles matches.

The qualifying rounds are scheduled from 28-29 September, while the main draw will be from 30 September-5 October.

The boys and girls U-16 and U-14 category will be from 6-12 October.

The tournament carries a total prize purse of Rs 21.55 lakh and kit allowance in the junior categories.

Chairman and senior managing director of DCM Shriram Ltd Ajay S Shriram announced Rs 25,000 scholarships to the winners and runners-up of the U16 and U14 singles events to support the emerging young talents. *—PTI*

IOA TREASURER YADAV THREATENS LEGAL ACTION AGAINST PREZ USHA

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Indian Olympic Association (IOA) treasurer Sahdev Yadav on Tuesday threatened legal action against the body's president PT Usha for "defaming" his image after she issued a show cause notice to him on the basis of a complaint challenging his eligibility to hold the post.

On 10 September, Usha sought explanation from Yadav, who is also currently the president of the Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWLF), following an anonymous complaint alleging that he and some other IOA officials are continuing in office in violation of the age and tenure guidelines set by the National Sports Code. Under the Sports Code, it is mandatory for an official to step aside after 12 consecutive years in office. Yadav has also been a former secretary of the Indian Weightlifting Federation and has been on its board for 15 years. *—PTI*

'DIFFERENT AGENDA'

Jay Shah to remain BCCI secretary for now

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Jay Shah *PHOTO: PTI*

The BCCI Apex Council will meet on Wednesday to discuss a variety of issues related to the Board's functioning but the appointment of a new secretary to replace the outgoing Jay Shah is not on the agenda.

It will be the last apex council meet before the Board's 93rd Annual General Meeting in Bengaluru in five days' time. The appointment of a new secretary has become necessary after Shah was unanimously elected as the next ICC Chairman. However, he will not step down from his current role as BCCI Secretary during the upcoming AGM, as he is scheduled to assume his new position only from 1 December.

But even a discussion on the process of nomination is not part of the eight items listed in the apex council's agenda which features, among others, the update on Byju's matter. The BCCI has a payment settlement issue with their former title sponsor.

The embattled edtech firm ended its sponsorship deal with the BCCI in March last year. The Bengaluru-based company, co-founded by Byju Raveendran, had initially signed a jersey sponsorship deal in March 2019 for three years, which was later extended by another year for a reported sum of USD 55 million.

Payments were made until September 2022, but the controversy revolves around unpaid dues from October 2022 to March 2023. *—PTI*

India beat Maldives 3-0 in SAFF U17 Championships

Second half substitute Hemneichung Lunkim struck a brace as a dominant India blanked Maldives 3-0 to continue their winning streak at the SAFF U17 Championships here on Tuesday. After Samson Ahongshangbam gave India the lead in the 14th minute, Lunkim scored in the 74th and 89th minute in the second and final Group A match at the Changlimithang Stadium. Having already qualified for the semi-finals after their 1-0 victory over Bangladesh in the three-team group, India emerged Group A winners with six points. Bangladesh also made the last-four stage from this group as the runners-up side. India will now face the runners-up team from Group B in the first semi-final on 28 September. Samson opened the scoring with a spectacular diving header, perfectly connecting a cross from Manbhakupar Malngiang from the right flank. *—PTI*